

Daily Sacrifices

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And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days (Dan 12:11).

What *exactly* is this daily sacrifice spoken of in Daniel 12?

What does scripture mean when it says that ‘the daily sacrifice shall be taken away’?

Daniel 12:9 tells us that these words in the book of Daniel “are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”.

It is now time to understand!

Chapter 1

Daily Sacrifices

The Old Testament discusses *two daily sacrifices* which were required offerings as part of the correct worship of God: one in the morning and one in the evening. There are a number of scriptures which talk about these sacrifices, but for the purposes of this example it would be sufficient to refer to only a few of them. Notice what is stated in 2 Kings 16:

“And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the **morning** burnt offering, and the **evening** meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by. Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded” (2 Kings 16:15-16).

The book of 1 Chronicles also discusses two daily sacrifices:

“And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that *was* at Gibeon, To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering **continually morning and evening**, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel” (1 Chron. 16:39-40).

The word “continual” in verse 40 comes from the Hebrew word “tamiyd” and could be translated as: “**continuance... constant** (or adverbially constantly); elipitically the regular daily sacrifice: **always, continual, daily, perpetual**”. The *continual* morning and evening sacrifices are to be *constant*, regular *daily sacrifices* which must be performed *perpetually*, or throughout our generations; forever. This is what scripture clearly indicates! To fulfill the obligation of morning and evening daily sacrifices throughout *our* generations, morning and evening sacrifices must be offered to God – even today! Notice the permanency of this obligation in 2 Chronicles:

“Behold, I build an house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate *it* to him... *sweet incense ...morning and evening... This is an ordinance for ever* to Israel” (2 Chron. 2:4).

Evidently, two sacrifices are to be offered to God daily - even today: one in the morning and another in the evening. Again:

“And they burn unto the LORD **every morning and every evening** burnt sacrifices and **sweet incense**” (2 Chron. 13:11).

Daily sacrifices?

An obvious and important question should immediately jump to mind: **What kind of daily sacrifices do we need to offer, morning and evening**, to fulfill *our* obligation towards God of *sacrifices and sweet incense*? Let us allow scriptures in the New Testament to answer this question:

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a **spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices**, *acceptable to God* by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Scripture tells us that God's Church is a *spiritual* house which is made up of lively stones. As lively stones forming God's Church, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices! God's people are no longer required to offer physical burnt sacrifices, but *spiritual* sacrifices. [More on this later]. Scripture clearly states that these sacrifices must be acceptable to God if they are to correctly fulfill our spiritual obligation.

“By him therefore let us offer **the sacrifice of praise to God continually**, that is, *the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name*” (Heb. 13:15).

Hebrews 13:5 gets more specific as to the spiritual daily sacrifices required of God's people. However, there are more scriptures that clarify this further:

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of **odours**^{G2368} [2368 = incense], **which are the prayers of saints**” (Rev. 5:8)

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much **incense**^{G2368}, that he should offer *it* with the **prayers of all saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the **incense**^{G2368}, which came with the **prayers of the saints**, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand” (Rev. 8:3-4).

Evidently, the spiritual sacrifices God's people must offer twice a day are prayers to God, our Heavenly Father. When scripture discusses God's people offering the continual, or daily sacrifices, it is referring to spiritual prayers offered to God by His people. These are the daily sacrifices we must be

offering as a tool which accompanies the work done in getting ourselves ready as the bride of Christ and to deliver God's message. Old Testament scriptures demonstrate that only God's priests were to perform the daily sacrifices, twice a day, morning and evening. This places an important emphasis and responsibility on God's priests today, but certainly includes all of God's people in the New Testament Church (Eph. 2:18; Rom. 5:1-2). **AS GOD'S PEOPLE WE MUST TODAY PERFORM SACRIFICES**, twice a day, which in this New Testament era consists of offering acceptable prayers to God:

“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a **sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God**” (Phil. 4:18).

Notice the following New Testament example:

“I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers **night and day**” (2 Tim. 1:3).

(Please also see Lk. 2:37 and 1 Tim. 5:5).

The fact that the Old Testament sacrifices were performed twice a day should act as a blueprint for us today! We should be setting aside two blocks of time per day – one in the morning and one in the evening – to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. We must keep in remembrance that this requirement was instituted by God to be kept throughout our generations (2 Chron. 2:4; Heb. 13:15). We must get ourselves “back on track” and ensure that we are performing our spiritual obligation toward God! God's people must develop an *intimate* relationship with their Creator through prayer; how else can we have a close relationship with God and expect our prayers to be heard, accepted and answered unless we develop a close

relationship with Him through contact at least twice a day? Being in contact with God twice a day is the minimum Biblical requirement (2 Chron. 13:11; Heb 13:15 etc)! Not fulfilling this obligation would mean that one is not as close to God as one would like to think! Think about a relationship you have with the person whom you are closest, then think about the quality and frequency of your communication with that individual. All things being equal, to have a close relationship with a person you would need to be in close contact with that individual, otherwise you might not be as close to that person as you think!

1 Peter 2:5 tells us that our spiritual sacrifices must be acceptable to God; this means effort must be expended in ensuring the sacrifices are quality ones which would be well received and approved by God the Father. Let us here notice the effort and laborious work involved in preparing and offering sacrifices in the Old Testament. This should give us some idea of the kind of effort required in the spiritual sacrifices which we must today offer to God:

“And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, **Choose you one bullock** for yourselves, and **dress it first**; for ye are many; and **call on the name of your gods**, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made...And **Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob**, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And **with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD**: and **he made a trench about the altar**, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And **he put the wood in order**, and **cut the bullock in pieces**, and laid

him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, **Do it the second time.** And they did it the second time. And he said, **Do it the third time.** And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and **he filled the trench also with water.** *And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again”* (1 Kings 18:25-26, 31-37).

As pointed out in this Old Testament passage, sacrifices required time and much detail to be performed correctly! A sacrifice was a laborious exercise. God required that everything be done a certain way for these sacrifices to be acceptable to Him. The way Elijah went about performing the sacrifice displayed his attitude of wanting to do things right in the eyes of His Creator. He unwaveringly ensured that all details of the sacrifice were acceptable before God. Elijah understood that it was a privilege for him to be able to do this and have this kind of relationship with His Father and Creator. This is what we must strive for, as we today perform and offer our sacrifices to God.

What was the point of the Old Testament animal sacrifices? God required animal sacrifices for three reasons:

- 1) As a form of worship
- 2) To provide temporary forgiveness of sin; removal of sin
- 3) To foreshadow the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Lev. 4:35; 5:10).

Once Jesus Christ came to this earth and died for the forgiveness of sin, all ordinances were nailed to the cross – no more physical sacrifices are required (Col. 2:14). Since Christ's death, He sits on the right hand of God the Father as our ultimate High Priest. We are to come boldly before God the Father and in faith offer spiritual sacrifices, or prayer:

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;* And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:11-22).

In this New Testament era, God's Church is made up of individuals whom He has specially called out of this World. God has given His people the opportunity and privilege of getting to know Him and His Son intimately through a deeper

understanding of His inspired Word. God is also using this time to get to know *us* more intimately. Our approach to, and the fulfilling of, our daily sacrifices (morning and evening prayers) exposes our attitude and true intentions to God of how seriously we take our calling and election. The quality of our daily sacrifices reveals our true motives, intentions and desires to God! Our daily sacrifices show God how desirous we are to want to develop a deep and close relationship with Him; they demonstrate our reliance, respect and love for Him.

Daniel 12

God's people must be conscientiously and meticulously going about their morning and evening daily sacrifices. Dan. 12:4 and 9 clearly demonstrate that Daniel's message is sealed up till the time of the end. Daily sacrifices are performed in this end time (Dan. 12:11). Who else, other than God's people, should be performing these daily spiritual sacrifices? God's people must be diligently communicating with their Creator twice a day – in the morning and in the evening, just as commanded within the pages of our Bibles!

Notice Dan. 12:11:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days”.

Many have thought that a temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and that the temple sacrifices will again begin to take place and thus the sacrifices spoken of in Dan 12 will be able to be ‘taken away’ as outlined in the above scripture. However, this cannot be correct because we know that all ordinances were nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). The physical sacrifices will not be re-introduced in the Church – even if the Jews might re-introduce them in Jerusalem! It is evident that God's people must be performing daily sacrifices, which in this New Testament era are spiritual in nature. It is a responsibility

we have, but also a tremendous opportunity and wonderful privilege which we have been given to come before the Great God of the Universe in an intimate relationship which is offered to us by prayer through Jesus Christ our spiritual and ultimate High Priest.

Let us do that which is required of us to ensure that we fulfill our daily spiritual obligation as God's people!

Recapitulation

- The Old Testament discusses two daily sacrifices required as part of correct worship (i.e. 2 Kings 16:15-16; 1 Chron. 16:39-40).
- These daily sacrifices are to be offered 'continually', or 'perpetually' (1 Chron. 16:40; 2 Chron. 2:4).
- The Old Testament daily sacrifices were extremely detailed and laborious exercises (1 Kings 18:25-26, 31-37).
- All ordinances were nailed to the cross, indicating that no more *physical* sacrifices are required (Col. 2:14).
- God's faithful people must continue to fulfill their spiritual obligation by offering *spiritual* sacrifices to God – morning and evening – continually (2 Chron. 13:11; 1 Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:15)!

Chapter 2

Spiritual Sacrifices

- Christ's instructions

In chapter one of this booklet we discussed the daily sacrifice and how imperative it is for God's people today to offer two spiritual daily sacrifices to God as part of correct worship of our Creator. In this chapter we will take a close look at the instructions given to us on how we are to go about fulfilling these spiritual sacrifices. Instructions were given by Jesus Christ Himself as He spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and in reply to a question asked by one of His disciples:

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, **Lord, teach us how to pray**^{G4336}[worship]” (Lk. 11:1).

Jesus Christ knew how to keep in contact with His Father in heaven, and as a result had a life filled with power from God. During Christ's Sermon on the Mount, He took the time to give *extremely detailed instructions* on *how* we are to pray thereby giving us the direction needed to correctly fulfill our spiritual daily sacrifices. Jesus Christ taught that there is real power that comes from prayer. Prayer is what keeps our spiritual armor intact and strong (Eph. 6:11-18).

Privacy in prayer

Notice Christ's words in response to the disciple's question on prayer:

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”
(Matt. 6:6)

Christ here gives *two* important requirements for performing effective spiritual sacrifices, and then tells us the result of successfully applying them. First of all, Christ tells us to “enter into your closet” and then He tells us to “shut the door”. The word ‘closet’ here refers to a ‘*chamber generally used for privacy, a spot for retirement, or a secret room*’. In other words, when we pray, we are to opt for a place which is private. Christ stresses privacy if we are to have quality time with God. The phrase ‘shut the door’ again makes it clear that our prayer sessions are to be held in a private, secluded place so that *nothing* will interrupt our prayer time, and the reason for this is so that we can give God our undivided attention. God wants us to be *intimate* with Him, and Christ is here outlining the best way to do this!

Examples are recorded in the Bible demonstrating that Christ chose solitary places to pray. Notice Luke 5:16:

“And he *withdrew* himself into the *wilderness*, and prayed.”

Strong’s tells us that the word ‘wilderness’ means ‘solitary place’. Christ ‘withdrew’ Himself to go to a solitary place for private prayer.

Another example is outlined in Mark 1:35:

“And in the morning, *rising up a great while before day*, he went out, and departed into a *solitary place*, and there prayed.”

Christ set an example of going to a solitary place to pray. This would be free from any distractions. Mark 1:35 also shows that Christ awoke *extra early*, again indicating the importance of being free from distractions, and also suggesting that He prioritized time and gave God the choicest part of the day, before anything or anyone would compete for His time and attention.

One of the Commentaries states:

“This priority of forsaking rest physically to attend to spiritual needs is difficult on the flesh. The flesh always protests inconvenience for spiritual pursuits. Yet, many forsake physical rest to pursue secular projects. Businessmen often skip needed rest in order to attend to their business. Many cut their physical rest short to earn an extra buck to gain materially. Some will stay up all night playing games or reading fiction or watching television. So, if we can skip rest to pursue these matters of which some are of questionable character, how much more willing should we be to skip physical rest to attend to our spiritual needs? If we are going to succeed spiritually, one will need to learn and practice earnestly this matter of spiritual priority”.

Clearly, Christ’s number one desire was to succeed spiritually! He knew He needed to offer quality time to God if He was going to be intimate with Him and if His requests would be answered! Is our number one desire to succeed spiritually? The time and effort we place in our prayer time reveals ourselves to God.

God openly rewards

“...pray to your Father which is in secret, and *thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*” (Matt. 6:6)

If we carry out this instruction of fulfilling our spiritual obligation, God will reward us ‘openly’. This is the result! God leaves the door wide open, allowing Himself the liberty to reward us in any way and as abundantly as He deems fit. There is no telling what rewards God will grant – we just know that He will reward us overwhelmingly. This is a promise from God, and if we do our part in fulfilling our spiritual obligations, we can *in faith* rely on His abundant blessings! The word ‘openly’ there in verse 6 means, ‘mightily, and publicly’. God will reward us mightily and publicly *if* we apply Christ’s instruction on prayer and offer acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God!

Do not use vain repetitions

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matt. 6:7).

We are warned against “vain repetitions” and “much speaking”. Christ is not condemning repetition in itself, but He is condemning *vain* repetition. Strong’s concordance tells us that the phrase ‘*vain repetitions*’ mean to ‘*speak tediously; or to speak saying nothing*’. In other words, prayer requires more of the heart than it does the tongue.

James 5:16 confirms:

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”.

‘Effectual’ and ‘fervent’ mean ‘active and efficient’. In other words, God wants our prayers to be dynamic and full of life, energy and excitement! God is not interested in boring, vain repetitions. He wants our prayers to be efficient and *well-organized*. He wants us to know what we are going to say, and then to go boldly before Him with our petitions. He wants us to be *excited* about being able to go to Him. God wants us to talk to Him as though we have something *exciting and important* to

tell Him. He wants us to be excited about the privilege we have to come before Him.

“Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father *knoweth* what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matt. 6:8)

The fact that God knows what we need before we ask is not something that should stop or impede our daily sacrifices. This is something that should in fact *encourage* us to pray! The fact that God knows what things we need of *before* we pray is not an excuse not to pray. God already knows what we need but He still wants us to go to Him because it demonstrates our dependence on Him, shows that we are submissive to Him and under His authority. God knows our needs, but He promises to grant them *as* we ask and *as* we pray to Him.

Prayer outline

“After this manner therefore pray ye” (Matt. 6:9).

The phrase ‘pray you’ is a strong exhortation to pray. Praying is not optional for God’s people; it is a command which we need to take seriously. To help us, Christ gave us a prayer outline in Matthew 6 which lists the main principles we should include in our prayers. The prayer outline includes an introduction, six main petitions, and a conclusion as follows:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

“Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9)

The instruction Christ gave us to begin our prayers is ‘Our Father who art in heaven’ (Matt. 6:9). This clearly indicates that the opening sentences of our prayers should focus on our relationship with God. The term ‘Father’ denotes a loving, close relationship with the One who has our best interests in mind. Our ‘Father’ is One who we can come to in a private audience, and pour out our heart in prayer. We must be detailed, expressing our desires, hopes and dreams. This should encourage us to come boldly to Him as it states in Hebrews 4:16.

‘Our Father who art in heaven’ also tells us something about the direction of our prayers. It reminds us that we are praying to the God who resides in heaven. As we offer our spiritual sacrifices, we should be thinking about where our prayers are going and to whom they are being directed.

As we begin our prayers, we need to stress the power and might of God, aware that these opening statements set the tone for our communication with God. In prayer, we speak to the Creator Who resides in the throne room in heaven. We must come to God boldly and reverently, knowing with whom we are communicating.

Hallowed be your name

This is the part of the prayer where we give God praise! It is where we show Him that we understand His divine character, attributes, nature, wisdom and power. The word ‘hallowed’ in Matt. 6:9 means “to be made holy, revered, sanctified, set apart, to honor and glorify”. If we combine the two words ‘hallowed’ and ‘name’, we understand that God must be honored and glorified for who He is. This is where we show God that we understand *exactly* who He is and what He stands for. We must show God that we understand His character and what He does. God has many names and titles and we should mention these as we pray to Him, showing Him

that we understand who He is and what He stands for; and by doing so we are glorifying Him and His name.

Here are a few of the titles and names that God carries:

- 1) **‘Elohim’**. Genesis 1:1 uses the name ‘Elohim’. This means ‘God family’. God the Father is the Head of the Family.
- 2) **‘Yahweh Rapha’**. God is the God who heals us (Ex. 15:26)!
- 3) **‘God Almighty’**. God is a powerful God (Gen. 35:11)!
- 4) **‘Most High God’**. God is the supreme Being in the whole universe (Gen. 14:18)!
- 5) **‘Everlasting God’**. The God we worship is a perpetual God (Gen. 21:33).
- 6) **‘God is Victory’**. God is the One who gives us victory (Ex. 17:15).
- 7) **‘God is Creator’**. God is the One who creates, accomplishes, fashions, finishes etc., (Ps. 95:6).

Some other names and titles which God carries are ‘God of Righteousness’, ‘God of Peace’, ‘God of Israel’ etc. This is the God we must glorify. Knowing God’s names, titles, and what He stands for, helps us to glorify and worship Him more closely and effectively.

Thy Kingdom come

Jesus Christ commands that we pray for the setting up of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:10). The fervency with which we pray to God on this petition shows Him how much we yearn to be born into His Family as His Sons, and for His Kingdom to be set up on this earth. We know the terrible plight of humanity and we, as God’s people, are the ones who know of the only solution to all of man’s problems. For this petition to be received, we must honestly desire God’s Kingdom to come and be set up to bring an end to the division, competition, strife, vanity etc., that this world is increasingly facing.

In an article entitled “Thy Kingdom come” which appeared in the December 1979 Good News magazine, the author wrote:

“Firstly, we must comprehend what the words ‘Thy Kingdom come’ literally mean. Paraphrased into modern English it reads: ‘I fervently desire, with my whole being, the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the government of God on this earth’.

To entirely grasp the significance of these concepts, we must experience true compassion for our brothers on this planet (Ezek 9:4). Our world is utterly wretched, its people are miserable and doleful, and we must care! We must beseech God to intervene in world affairs and straighten mankind out.

The converted Christian will pray for God’s kingdom to come, for the return of Jesus Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth and rule over the entire earth administering God’s laws. We should be praying for the end of hunger and poverty, sickness, sin, death and so on. We should be fervently praying for the end of all this. We know that it is only God’s Kingdom that offers these solutions.”

Thy will be done...

“... Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”
(Matt. 6:10).

God’s will is doing what He tells us to do – in a right attitude. Christ dwelled on this same petition in His prayer to God (Lk. 22:42). The primary qualification for serving God is putting His will *first* in our lives. We should pray and ask God to help us do *His* will on earth just as it is being done in heaven. As we pray about this, we could talk to God about each of the Ten Commandments that are found listed in the book of Exodus, asking Him to help us understand them deeply and apply them meticulously and effectively!

In this petition to God, it would be appropriate to ask Him to help us always better understand what His will is, without allowing human reasoning to enter the equation. We could ask God to help us be more conscientious about what we say and how we say it, and of what and how we do things. Are we driven by wanting to please Him?

We must ask God to help us be submissive to His will without reluctance. We could use this petition to ask God to help us remove carnality, obstinacy and human nature which we are all prone to, and which hinders us from doing His will more effectively.

On this subject, the mini-study in the February 1981 *Good News* magazine states:

“You should ask God to help you understand and surrender to His will. Ask God to help you study and understand the foundation of all knowledge the Holy Bible in which He reveals His will for mankind.

Also, ask for God’s help, inspiration and guidance in expressing love, joy, warmth and affection to all your fellowmen. Ask Him to help you be longsuffering and gentle. Ask for meekness and humility and for the power of self control over your temper, weaknesses and lusts.

Ask for the living faith of Jesus Christ to trust God totally; to know that His way and His law are right – and that He stands behind and backs up His will, His laws and His promises to those who serve Him”.

There is much to include in this part of our petition to God – lots of areas we could discuss with Him to ensure that we do

His will more perfectly here on this earth – just as it is being done right now in heaven!

Give us this day our daily bread

This petition outlined in Matt. 6:11 should show God that we believe He in fact is provider of all our needs. We must demonstrate that we depend on Him for all our daily physical and spiritual needs. There is a lot to be understood from this petition, and lots that we can pray about under this one heading. Notice that scripture does not say ‘Give me’, but it states “Give us our daily bread”! We should certainly pray for our own needs, but we should also pray for the needs of our families, both physical and spiritual. We should also pray for the needs of the Work of God, that He will provide the Church with the laborers and income it needs to get His Work done.

Use this petition to ask God to continue giving His Church deeper understanding of His Truth and in that sense help receive our daily spiritual food. It would also be appropriate to here pray for any additional needs we might have or which we know others have, including healing and any other prayer requests. As we talk to God, we must be specific and detailed. This part of the petition teaches us about love and compassion.

Luke 11:3 gives us a clearer rendition of Matt. 6:11: “Give us *day by day* our daily bread”. The request here is not for a supply of needs which will last for a year or even a moment longer than a day! Christ tells us that we are to ask God each day for a daily supply of our needs. In the Old Testament, when the Israelites were in the desert, they had to rely on God *daily* for provisions. Notice Exodus 16:4:

“Then the Lord said to Moses, I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.
[Editor’s note: this is the same principle found in Matt. 6:11 and Lk. 11:3]. In this way I will

test them and see whether they will follow my instructions”.

God wants us to follow His instructions and pray *daily* for our needs? Do we have the faith that He will provide for us daily? God wanted the Israelites to rely on Him by asking Him for a supply of their needs *every day*! As human beings we tend to prefer the security of a supply of a year or more, but this prayer emphasizes living by faith which demonstrates constant dependence on God.

Note that the word “bread” in Matt. 6:11 indicates that we must stress praying for our needs rather than our wants. Bread does not stipulate luxuries! We must be careful not to focus our prayers on ‘wants’ and ‘desires’ rather than ‘needs’.

As already alluded to, when Christ told us to pray for our daily bread, He was of course referring to our daily *spiritual* nourishment as well as our physical nourishment. We are to ask God to feed us spiritually every day! We should ask Him to help us in our daily bible study, asking Him to guide us in the subjects we should study. It would be appropriate to ask God to give us depth of understanding in the areas of our study.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

Notice Matthew 6:12 states:

“Forgive us our sins *as* we forgive those who have sinned against us”

The word ‘as’ in this verse means: ‘according, as soon as, like and when’. Essentially, verse 12 could read: ‘forgive us our sins, *when* (or ‘as soon as’) we forgive those who have sinned against us!’ This petition which is to be included in our spiritual sacrifice is full of meaning! We need to understand that we must first of all forgive those who have sinned against us. God will not forgive us if we carry on in sin. We must forgive those who have wronged us, get our attitude

straightened out and *then* ask God to forgive the way we wronged Him. This is a two way system! No one can *truly* pray for forgiveness of sins and expect to be forgiven without first being in a humble and forgivable attitude.

Notice Mark 11:25

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have anything against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

If we are to obtain mercy from God we must first show ourselves merciful to others. It is so important that we pray about and learn this principle, because if we do not forgive we will not be forgiven, and if we are not forgiven we will not be able to enter into the Kingdom of God.

In the April 1979 Good News magazine, there is an article entitled “Forgive us our sins”, and the author writes:

“Do you really know what you are telling God, the solemn commitment you are making, the definite condition you are setting when you say to Him “forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us”? By your own words you are engaging yourself into a covenant with Him, agreeing that He should only forgive you as you yourself forgive others – show mercy to you as you yourself show mercy to others! Think about this!

Do you realize that to forgive someone is to forget his mistakes – whatever his motives or the consequences? Your salvation depends upon your totally forgetting the offenses committed against you.”

Our sins alienate us from God. Notice further in Matt. 5:24:

“Leave there thy gift [sacrifice] before the altar, and go thy way; *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and *then* come and offer thy gift.”

When we sin, or enter into an argument with friends or family, we must resolve those differences otherwise they will be a hindrance to our daily sacrifices. On this scripture, Clarke’s commentary states:

“Do not attempt to bring any offering to God while you are in a spirit of enmity against any person, or have any difference with your neighbor which you have not used your diligence to get adjusted.”

Here are another two verses which we must take note of in Matthew 6:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15)

If we want this petition to reach the throne room of God and result in effective, acceptable prayer, we must ask God to help us forgive those who have wronged us, and then ask Him to forgive our sins.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Matthew 6:13 asks us to pray to God, asking Him not to lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from evil. This petition does *not* imply that God will lead us into evil and that we should pray that He has a change of mind. God does not lead us into temptation! Notice what is said in James 1:13 and 1 Corinthians 10:13:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jam. 1:13).

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

In this petition we should not request an exemption from trial, but instead claim the promise made to us by God to grant an escape from it (1 Cor. 10:13). It is appropriate to ask God to help us find the way of escape which He provides and that we have the faith necessary to face the way of escape that is provided. God will *always* offer us a way of escape from trial – He wants to see that we ask for it, that we will find it and have the faith to apply it.

For thine is the kingdom, power, glory, for ever

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt. 6:13).

This is where we close our prayer with power, offering God praise and thanksgiving. This last section of our daily sacrifice must once again focus on the greatness of God. This is the section where we again give praise to God, thanking Him for *all* the blessings which He has given us and for all that He does in our lives. List and discuss them in detail with Him! We must acknowledge our blessings by listing them and showing our appreciation for each and every one. We must use this opportunity to thank Him for all our blessings, including answered prayer, healing and so on, and in so doing praise Him for the greatness and mercy He shows and extends to us.

Through and by the authority of Jesus Christ

We are to conclude our spiritual sacrifice to God through and by the authority of His Son, Jesus Christ:

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, He will give it you” (Jn. 16:23)

Christ tells us to pray in *His* name. When we know that the content of our prayer is in accordance with God’s will, we can rightfully ask Him for everything in *Jesus’ name*. As long as what we pray about and ask for is God’s will, His authority will stand behind our requests. Christ is our High Priest and will intervene and mediate on our behalf (Heb. 8:1).

Amen

Amen is the word that should end our spiritual sacrifices. Although it is a short word, it is full of meaning. The word “amen” is of Hebrew origin, and means ‘to be firm, secure, to be true and faithful’. It also means ‘verily, certainly, so be it’. When we conclude our prayers to God by saying *amen*, we are actually confirming and binding ourselves to what we said in the prayer. The *American Tract Society Dictionary* states that *amen* "asserts our sincerity and invokes the fulfillment of our words: When we say *amen* at the conclusion of our prayers, we are saying, "So it is, so be it, let it be done:" *Amen* is the stamp of approval with which we seal our prayers — committing ourselves to what was said in the prayer. Because of this, we must be sure that the content of our prayers is true and faithful to God's Word. We must also be sure that we will then do what it takes to fulfill our part in the prayer we endorsed. We must certainly understand its deep meaning and use it knowing its full implications!

Spiritual sacrifices – morning and evening

In the Old Testament the Israelites were instructed to offer two sacrifices daily – morning and evening (2 Kings 16:15-16;

1 Chron. 16:39-40 etc). God's Word tells us that these sacrifices were instituted to be kept forever, "throughout our generations", (1 Chron. 16:39-40; 2 Chron. 2:4) albeit in a spiritual way in this New Testament era (Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices will be "taken away" at the time of the end, when the abomination of desolation is set up (Dan. 12:11). These spiritual sacrifices will be 'taken away' in righteousness to the Place of Safety. We must do our part to be accounted worthy to be taken to a Place of Safety. It would be logical to state that those who are "taken" would be the ones in the true worship of God the Father and perform these spiritual sacrifices as commanded within the pages of our Bible! We must fulfill our spiritual obligation and ensure that we are performing our allotted daily spiritual sacrifices! Many blessings will be reaped for obeying and adhering to this spiritual requirement.

Recapitulation

- Christ gave a detailed outline of how we should fulfill our *spiritual* sacrifices (Matt. 6:6-13).
- God requires that we perform our spiritual sacrifices in a private place where we can be intimate with our Creator (Matt. 6:6).
- God the Father will reward us openly for acceptable daily spiritual sacrifices offered to Him (Matt. 6:6; 1 Pet. 2:5).
- The daily sacrifices will be taken (Dan 12:11) to a Place of Safety. Those worthy to be taken will be found offering their allotted daily spiritual sacrifices.
- God will reward us openly if we fulfill our spiritual obligations in a way that is acceptable to God (Matt. 6:6).

Chapter 3

Daily sacrifices – Further Help!

Many articles were written during the administration of Mr. Armstrong which include much helpful information that we can draw upon to aid us in our efforts to offer acceptable sacrifices to God. In this final chapter we will quote from some of these powerful articles:

The Power of Prevailing Prayer *Tomorrow's World, November 1971*

Few people realize in our godless world today that even in the atomic nuclear age there is a tremendous POWER available to mankind which has seldom been tapped — *the power of prayer!*

Prayer — when rightly used — packs explosive power. It is spiritual dynamite! It gets things done; it accomplishes MIRACLES; it is the driving thrust behind the Work of the living God; it provides the irresistible ENERGY which motivates, moves, and inspires articles in TOMORROW'S WORLD, and which inspires the power-packed sermons of God's true ministers as they preach the Gospel to the world!

Prayer is a mighty source of spiritual dynamism, because real, efficacious prayer puts you right in contact with the supreme Power of the whole UNIVERSE — it brings you right before the glorious, resplendent, dazzling Throne of the great Creator *GOD!*

Have you ever thought about prayer in that light before? If not, maybe it's time you did! Notice, from the Bible, just a few of the accomplishments of real prayer.

The Bible is full of examples of effective prayer, examples which were written down and recorded for OUR benefit, today (see Rom. 15:4).

For instance, Moses was a humble man — a man who didn't think he had the ability to lead Israel out of Egypt, a man who didn't feel he was particularly eloquent (Num. 12:3; Ex. 4:10). Perhaps he stammered or stuttered when he spoke.

Nevertheless, when Moses prayed, God took notice. Even when Israel fell into depravity and corruption and God was angry with them; and determined to destroy the whole nation, Moses fell on his face and interceded for Israel — and God still listened! Because of the one prayer of this one man, God changed His mind, and the whole course of the future of the world was CHANGED! (See Ex. 32:7-14.)

Does that example show you the unconquerable power of heartfelt prayer?

Elijah was a human being with similar drives to most people (James 5:17). When Jezebel sought Elijah's life, he fled into the wilderness (I Kings 19:1-4), very discouraged. He was spiritually and physically exhausted. Yet this was the man God listened to when he prayed that there would be no rain on the earth for three years (I Kings 17:1). This was the man who made an altar, put wood under a bullock, and poured four barrels of *water* over it, drenching it three times in that manner, and who then prayed to God:

"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. *Hear me, O Lord, hear me*, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (I Kings 18:36-37).

How effective was this short, 20-second prayer?

"Then the FIRE of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (verse 38).

There is a convincing testimony of the DYNAMIC POWER of earnest prayer!

Your prayers can work miracles
Tomorrow's World, November 1970

When Abraham prayed, God heard, and gave him a son miraculously in his old age. When Moses prayed, an entire nation was saved from total destruction. When Joshua prayed, the sun stood still in the heavens. When Samuel prayed, an earthquake terrified an alien army and sent thousands of troops fleeing away. When David prayed, God intervened and won battles for Israel. When Hezekiah prayed, the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a single night, and the sun retreated ten degrees in the sky.

When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) prayed, God delivered them from a roaring furnace of fire. When Daniel prayed, he was delivered from hungry, voracious lions.

When Jesus Christ prayed, the Father gave Him spiritual POWER to perform miracles, daily. He received power to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and to raise the dead back to life!

When the apostles called on God, in the name of Christ, earthquakes rent the earth, miracles of healing occurred, enemies of the truth were blinded or struck dead.

Here was *POWER!*

But what about you?

Are *your* prayers answered? If not, *why* not?

Why So Little Power Today?

We live in an age of materialism. The world has lost the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the power of prayer. Consequently, we live in an age of very limited spiritual power. The churches, today, are empty shells. They, too, have forgotten the power of prayer and lost the knowledge of the true God!

No wonder Jesus Christ, speaking prophetically of our generation today, said, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8.)

When people *do* pray today, so often it is just some sort of "religious exercise." They pray because they feel it is expected of them — a duty to perform. They don't expect an answer. If there were a tremendous answer from God, why, they would be speechless, dumbfounded!

No wonder there is so little spiritual POWER in the world, today!

How can YOU begin to pray more effectively — with more success — more POWER — more *results*?

What Prayer Is

First, let's understand just what prayer is. The most often used Hebrew word for prayer in the Old Testament is *tephillah* and means "intercession, supplication." It comes from the word *palal*, which means "to judge, entreat, intercede, pray, make supplication." The *literal* meaning of the word, in the Hebrew, is "to prostrate oneself," or "to bow down."

Prayer, then, is simply intercession with God — or earnest, intense *supplication*. It is done in an attitude of humility, contrition and deep respect. Since the word itself means "to bow down," the general way to pray is *on one's knees*. Most examples in the Bible show the usual position of prayer is on one's knees, bowing before God. The most important thing, however, is not the literal position (one can pray hanging upside down in a well, if he needs to!), but the ATTITUDE of humility, reverence and respect for God!

Supplication means to "make a humble entreaty, to ask for earnestly and humbly." To *entreat* means "to ask earnestly or *urgently*, intercede, *plead*."

All these definitions are contained in the one word "prayer". To most people today, "prayer" conjures up in their minds an act of sanctimonious piety, and reciting a psalm or liturgy. Such an idea is far from the truth, but the religions of this world have *perverted* even the true meaning of prayer, and turned it into a thing of ridicule and superstition!

Prayer is NOT mental magic, or mumbo-jumbo. It is not a psychological "pep talk" that people give themselves to feel better.

Prayer — *true* prayer — is communication with the Almighty God, and Jesus Christ at His right hand. Prayer is *talking*, in an attitude of humility, reverence, awe and respect, to *GOD!*

What is so weird or strange about that ?

But how should you pray? What should you pray for? How can you be *sure* your prayers are ANSWERED?

Obedience a Key

"God heareth not sinners" (John 9:31). Sin is the transgression of God's Law (I John 3:4). Therefore, if you want to have your prayers heard and answered by God, you must first *want* to REPENT of any sins which separate you from God. Isaiah was inspired to write, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have *separated* between you and your God, and your sins have *hid his face* from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2).

There is the crux of the matter. Most prayers are not heard and go unanswered because of SIN! If you purposely and maliciously harbor lawlessness and rebellion in your life, you will not be heard — your prayers will be an abomination to God (Prov. 28:9; Psalm 109:7).

But if a person departs from sin, and cries out to God from his heart, his prayer WILL be heard! Notice what an angel told Daniel: "Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst *set thine heart to understand*, and to chasten thyself before thy God, **THY WORDS WERE HEARD...**" (Dan. 10:12).

Our God is very merciful — He will hear us from the moment that we *begin to want* to communicate with Him. *In essence, then, a WHOLEHEARTED DESIRE is the only precondition to prayer.*

God surely does not hear sinners who want to *remain* sinners — but God will quickly respond to sinners who *want to change, even while they are yet sinners.*

And notice again, what God inspired the Apostle John to write, for us: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we *keep his commandments*, and *DO* those things that are *pleasing* in his sight" (I John 3:22).

In order for your prayers to be heard, you must want to serve God with a sincere, faithful, devoted heart. You must strive to obey Him, and please Him in your actions, thoughts and words. Write for our free articles "What Is Real Repentance?" and "What Is a Real Christian?" They will show why so few, today, are close enough to God to have their prayers heard.

But obedience, alone, is not enough. You must also have FAITH in God, in order to be heard!

The Power of FAITH!

The Apostle Paul wrote, "But *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" (Heb. 11:6).

Jesus Himself gave a vital principle we must understand when He declared: "ACCORDING TO YOUR *FAITH* be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29).

Lack of real, tangible faith is a prime reason millions of prayers go unheard — unanswered.

James wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in FAITH, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*" (James 1:5-7).

What about you? Do you have real FAITH in God? Faith is the belief or assurance that what God says in His Word is TRUE — that God will do that which He has promised.

How can you obtain more faith?

There are two vital keys to increasing faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If you study God's Word, and drink in of it daily, you will become stronger in faith; you will learn more intimately

how God's many promises contained in His Word apply to *YOU!*

Faith is a gift (Gal. 5:22-23). It is not an emotion which you must work up yourself, struggling and agonizing to attain. You don't have to strive to have faith in God. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit!

As a person turns away from sin, yields his life to God, and surrenders to His government, God will give him the indwelling power of His Holy Spirit —the Spirit that imparts faith, the very faith Jesus Christ had (Gal. 2:16, 20; Phil. 3:9).

If you desire more of God's Spirit, and more faith, then go before God's throne and *ask* Him for it. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

Walk With God

Another secret of powerful prayer is walking with God. Abraham walked with God. So did Noah, Moses, Elijah and David. They came to know God intimately. They obeyed God faithfully, loyally. Abraham kept *all* God's commands, statutes, laws and ordinances (Gen. 26:5).

These men prayed to God often. They spent long hours in prayer, communing with God. But those people who "pray" today, usually spend mere minutes (or seconds) in "prayer." No wonder they have no spiritual POWER!

If you want power in your prayers, and spiritual POWER in your life, then you must *walk with God*.

Notice what the Prophet Micah wrote: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and *to walk HUMBLY with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8.)

Walking with God means spending time with Him — instead of with *material* things of the world. It involves TIME spent studying His Word, learning His truth, meditating on His principles and laws, and praying to Him for greater understanding, wisdom, guidance, and faith.

How can you WALK WITH GOD?

God will not walk with the proud, haughty, high minded and conceited. He is far off to them (I Peter 5:5). He walks with the HUMBLE in heart and mind (verses 5-6). The proud will not have their prayers answered (Luke 18:9-14).

But notice. God says, ". . . to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a *contrite* [humble] *spirit*, and *TREMBLETH at my word*" (Isa. 66:2).

HOW Should You Pray?

The first point to understand is that prayer is for *our* benefit. We should look forward to talking with our Creator. Consequently, we must never allow prayer to decay into a meaningless ritual.

So there can be no set rules for when to pray, how often to pray or how long to pray. A fervent, deeply felt short prayer is obviously much better than a lukewarm, lazy, long one.

Nonetheless we do need examples to follow. And God has provided them.

When should you pray? Jesus Christ rose up early in the morning to pray and commune with His Father. "And in the morning, rising up a great while *before* day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35).

The early morning hours, when all is peaceful and still, and your mind is uncluttered from the day's routine, is a wonderful time to spend in prayer. God wants us to give our *best* time to Him!

Jesus spent *long hours* in prayer to His Father. One particular time when He was facing tremendous decisions and knew that He needed special wisdom and inspiration, He spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12).

In the days of Christ and the apostles, it was customary to pray at certain times of the day — called "the hours of prayer" (Acts 3:1). There were three such times during the day — in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. David declared: "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice*" (Psalm 55:17).

The Prophet Daniel, a man greatly beloved in God's sight, prayed three times a day, even in the face of death! Knowing

that the Persian government had passed a law against prayer, "... his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees *three times a day, and prayed*, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

Why was Daniel such a wise, useful, effective servant of God? Where did he get the understanding and wisdom for which he was famous? (Dan. 1:17; 2:19-23.)

God gave him wisdom and understanding, because Daniel was faithful, walked with God, sought His guidance at *all* times, and prayed *regularly*.

Daniel made fewer mistakes in his work, accomplished much more that was worthwhile because he stayed close to God and sought Him REGULARLY! He did not allow daily duties, business, or physical activities to crowd out the time he spent with God in prayer, as many are prone to do today.

If *YOU* lack wisdom and understanding, it may well be due to your failure to pray constantly, regularly, and often to your Maker and Ruler in heaven!

Wrestling in Prayer

Most prayers today are namby-pamby, weak, insipid, ineffectual. They accomplish nothing at all and are a complete waste of time.

Wishy-washy, spineless, weak-kneed, "milk-toast" prayers, lukewarm prayers *never* have achieved miraculous results, and never will!

When you pray, do you put your *heart* into your prayers? Do you pray fervently, earnestly, pouring out your heart before His Throne of Grace?

Are you filled with ZEAL when you pray? Are you motivated with spiritual energy and alertness?

Can you imagine the insult it would be if you appeared before the President of the United States, in a private audience in the White House — and you became drowsy, droopy-eyed, and began to mumble your words and soon fell asleep?

How much more *disrespectful* is it of our heavenly Father when we come before His glorious, awe-inspiring throne and mumble our words while we're half asleep!

When Elijah prayed, he prayed *FERVENTLY*, and God caused a great drought to come on the land. Later he prayed fervently, and God brought rain in abundance. James wrote, "The effectual FERVENT prayer of a righteous [obedient] man *availeth much*" (James 5:16).

The original Greek word for "fervent" is *zelos* and means "heat, zeal, ardor." Moffatt translates this verse, "the prayers of the righteous have a POWERFUL EFFECT." The *Amplified Bible* says, "The EARNEST (HEARTFELT, CONTINUED) prayer of a righteous man makes TREMENDOUS POWER AVAILABLE — *dynamic in its working.*"

One of the keys to powerful effective prayer, therefore, is ZEAL.

Hannah wept sorely when she prayed. She was *really* zealous. She poured out her heart in her prayer to God — AND HE LISTENED! As a direct result, God opened her womb, and gave her a son who became the Prophet Samuel (I Sam. 1:9-15).

When Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was so earnest and intense that "being in an agony he prayed *more* earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Christ's prayers were HEARD (Heb. 5:7).

An example of how to "get through" to God is found in the book of Genesis. Perhaps you never thought of it this way before.

Jacob was in a mental quandary. He was returning home to his native land, but was fearful of his brother Esau. With humility, Jacob confessed he was not worthy of God's mercy, but prayed for deliverance (Gen. 32:9-12).

That night, Jacob was left alone, "and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob,

but Israel [that is, a prince of God]: for as a prince hast thou *POWER WITH GOD* and with men, *AND HAST PREVAILED*" (Gen. 32:24-28),

Notice this account carefully. Jacob wrestled all night with this person — the One who became Christ (verse 30). He did not give up. He was persistent, tenacious in wrestling. He was like a bulldog — he wouldn't let go.

Seeing this characteristic in Jacob, Christ changed his name to "Israel," meaning "a contender with God," "a prince of God," "striver-with-God," "he who strives with God." Jacob wrestled all night, showing he had *power* — he was not a spineless jellyfish. He was tenacious — determined. He wrestled until he *PREVAILED!*

God *blessed* him for his tenacity and perseverance — his "never-give-up," "never-quit" attitude.

This principle also applies to prayer. Jesus Christ said men should pray "and not to faint." Moffatt puts it, "never losing heart." The *Amplified* has it, "not to turn coward — faint, lose heart and give up" (Luke 18:1).

Vital Keys to Success in Prayer ***Plain Truth, November 1964***

THERE is a REAL God who sits at the controls of this universe.

He is an active, LIVING God. He controls all power, energies and forces!

He sits on a magnificent throne overlooking a dazzlingly beautiful court-like crystal-clear sea of glass. He is surrounded by twenty-four great, impressive SPIRIT BEINGS who are His counselors. Immediately around His throne are four more SPIRIT BEINGS of even greater office, power and brilliance. At His right hand is the living Jesus Christ.

Out from His throne proceed LIGHTNINGS, THUNDERS, VOICES — and ANGELIC MESSENGERS going to and from the earth. For this is the throne of the TRUE GOD (Rev. 4:1-6). He is the ALMIGHTY, and the heavens reverberate with THUNDER when He speaks.

Do You "Know" This God?

Are you FAMILIAR with the God described above? Are you ACQUAINTED with Him? Do you PRAY to THIS God?

You SHOULD.

For great and powerful as the true God is, He DELIGHTS in the man who will SEEK TO KNOW HIM, TALK TO HIM in prayer and SERVE HIM!

God has created man IN HIS OWN IMAGE. He wants men to DRAW CLOSE to Him, to IMBIBE OF HIS CHARACTER, to BECOME HIS SONS. The God of the Bible DELIGHTS in the prayer of the righteous (Prov. 15:8).

The trouble is, very few people nowadays know THE GOD OF THE BIBLE. They have invented their OWN "gods."

The PERSONAL Spirit Being of whom Jesus spoke and TO WHOM HE PRAYED — they know not. The God who CREATED this earth out of spirit energy, the God who actually SUSTAINS its LAWS and FORCES with His power — Him they know not. The PERSONAL God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — of Peter and Paul — they know not. The great GOVERNOR over men and nations — the One who has made literally HUNDREDS of SPECIFIC PREDICTIONS in Bible prophecy, and HAS and IS bringing them to pass — this LIVING GOD they know not.

However, you can absolutely PROVE the existence and active power of this God if you sincerely want to. Write IMMEDIATELY for the free booklet: "Does God Exist?" Also, the article, "Seven Proofs God Exists!" And the booklet: "The PROOF of the Bible!" They are all FREE to you for the asking, and will supply more basic ANSWERS to your questions along this line than you may have thought existed anywhere!

The PROOF is available. It's up to you to ASK FOR IT, CHECK IT and ACT ON IT!

Come to God WHOLEHEARTEDLY

As you study the above and other related literature, aggressively CHECK and PROVE the existence and active power of God! He WANTS you to do this.

Without it, you will ALWAYS be unsure of to WHOM you are praying, IF He is there, whether or not you can really BELIEVE the "specifics" of His will as revealed IN THE BIBLE.

This process is a vital KEY. Without it, YOU WILL SIMPLY BE UNABLE TO PUT YOUR ENTIRE FAITH AND BEING INTO YOUR PRAYERS.

But 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" (Heb. 11:6).

Notice also that you must DILIGENTLY SEEK GOD!

Where would you seek God if not in EARNEST PRAYER, in the real STUDY of the Bible, in OBSERVING and MEDITATING upon the creation of God — noting the perfect DESIGN in nature, the absolute, unchanging LAWS governing the action of all physical things, and the display of fantastic BEAUTY, HARMONY and POWER evident throughout the natural world. Also, you should seek to know and understand God by observing and exercising the spiritual HELP and STRENGTH you will receive in your own life as you begin to KNOW and to SERVE your Creator. Finally, you should — coupled with intensive Bible STUDY — observe and come to understand God's PLAN as He DIRECTLY INTERVENES in the affairs of the major nations of this world in bringing about literally DOZENS of EXACT and SPECIFIC fulfillments of Bible prophecy.

For Jesus said: "WATCH ye therefore, and PRAY ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" (Luke 21:36). Clearly, He meant for us to "watch" the fulfillment of prophecy in WORLD EVENTS — and in this way to be stimulated and inspired to PRAY EARNESTLY to the REAL GOD who ACTIVELY INTERVENES IN HUMAN AFFAIRS.

The Example of Elijah

Your Bible says in James 5:16-18: "The effectual FERVENT PRAYER of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he PRAYED EARNESTLY that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he PRAYED AGAIN, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Weak and human even as we are, Elijah PRAYED FERVENTLY. He KNEW God was there. He knew God ANSWERED PRAYER. So he got "stirred up." He put his whole BEING into his prayer.

AND GOD ANSWERED.

In our modern science-oriented, war-calloused, intellectually vain and "mind science" age above all others, we need to SEEK GOD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS! We must PROVE and KNOW that the PERSONAL God of Abraham does hear and answer prayer.

Revealing His ATTITUDE toward our prayers, God speaks of His people Israel in Hosea 7:14: "Though it was I who redeemed them, they have lied unto me; THEY NEVER PUT THEIR HEART INTO THEIR PRAYERS" {Moffatt Trans}.

Once you have absolutely PROVED the true God's EXISTENCE and ACTIVE POWER — and the Bible as HIS DIRECT REVELATION TO MAN — a second vital "key" to prayer is to FERVENTLY "SEEK" GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE BEING — AND TO PUT YOUR WHOLE HEART INTO YOUR PRAYERS!

Does God Still Answer Prayer *Tomorrow's World, October 1969*

WHY doesn't God answer my prayers?"

Every minister has had this question thrust at him in the course of counseling with some of his congregation. At one time or another, nearly every member of the "Christian world"

has asked himself the same question. Oftentimes the thought remains unspoken simply because we would rather not have to acknowledge, even to ourselves, the lack of real answers to prayer in our lives.

The God of your Bible claims to hear and promises to answer the requests of His followers. Why then don't many in our Christian society receive an answer to their prayers? Were these claims made only to people of ages gone by? Or are they valid today? Can you, in 1969, expect this same God to fulfill the same promises?

Are there any conditions imposed in order to qualify to receive these promises? What are the stipulations to be met before God will hear and actually answer your prayers?

Message Must Get Through

When you go to the Western Union office to send a telegram, you are relatively confident your message will arrive at its destination. Bad weather or an accident may knock the line out temporarily and your message is delayed. But as soon as the lines are repaired, the message is delivered.

The same principle applies to our prayers to God. We are sending a message. Generally it is an urgent message — a request for help — so we should be sure our lines of communication are operating properly. If the lines are "down" because we haven't met the proper requirements, the help isn't going to arrive. Therefore, we need to be sure we haven't short-circuited or broken the lines.

Surely none of us would *knowingly* sever his connection with God. Yet in our Western world of Christianity, millions of us readily admit we rarely pray except at a time of severe crisis. Then we aren't sure God has heard us and end up only hoping for an answer instead of actually expecting one. We haven't severed our connection with God. *We have never ESTABLISHED one!*

Look at the conditions which exist between you and your God. Have you made it a point to be in continual contact with Him so if there is ever a need, you can receive a speedy answer? Or have your lines of communication deteriorated so

badly that you don't even expect a reply? If so, remember, the fault rests with you.

God Has Not Grown Senile

One of the first reasons or ways we break our contact with God is found in this message to ancient Israel, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear ..." (Isa. 59:1). God hasn't become so old and feeble with the passing of a few hundred years that He is impotent and no longer able or willing to act on the needs of His people. Neither has He become so ancient of days and dull of hearing that He is oblivious to our prayers. He simply hasn't become senile and incapable of performing as in the past.

Continuing in Isaiah 59:2, "But YOUR INIQUITIES have separated between you and your God, and *your sins* have hid His face from you, *that He will not hear.*"

OUR PRAYERS AREN'T ANSWERED BECAUSE OF OUR SINS! It is our personal and national sins which have withheld the Creator's intervention from us. It is an eternal truth that God won't hear sinners. This message was given to Israel and then repeated to the people of Christ's time. It is ageless and has been recorded for our admonition as Christians today. "Now we know that GOD HEARS NOT SINNERS: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He hears" (John 9:31).

Sin is the transgression of the laws of God (I John 3:4). We break our relationship with God and fracture our lines of contact by disobeying the very One to whom we make our requests. Then we wonder why our prayers aren't answered. The solution is obvious. If we want an answer to prayer, we must first honor the *only* One who is capable of granting our needs. Obedience to His way of life and to His laws honors Him. That obedience removes one of the biggest obstacles to our receiving an answer to prayer.

More Keys to Receiving Answers

Once we begin to obey God, we also begin to apply a second principle needed in order to receive a response — WE

MUST SEEK GOD'S WILL. It is easy to pray and parrot the words "thy will be done." It is much more difficult to set aside every carnal and selfish desire and MEAN WITH ALL OUR HEART to seek God's will.

Our carnal nature will lead us astray unless we realize how deceitful our heart is. Any prayer offered to God or soliciting His aid must be in keeping with His way of life. We can't ask for someone else's misfortune or pray for problems to befall our fellowman. We can't pray with only a selfish motivation and expect to be heard. To be answered, our request must be in accord with God's desire for us and the rest of mankind.

Jesus Christ was and is our perfect example in everything He did.

He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; *because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me*" (John 5:30).

What is the "will of God"? How can you know whether or not you are actually seeking His will?

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; *who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (I Tim. 2:3-4). God's will then is that ALL MANKIND COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH *which produces salvation*. God's Word — THE BIBLE — points out the way to salvation and is the source of all truth (John 17:17).

A Christian comes to understand more of God's will by understanding more of the Bible. It pinpoints what His will is in every facet of human life. It gives instruction on how to have a happy married life. It directs parents in the proper methods of child rearing. And the Bible tells all mankind how to conduct itself toward God and man.

A truly converted Christian will be not only seeking but deeply desiring to live according to God's will as it is manifested in the Bible. He will want God's way — in everything. He will seek to overcome "the way that seems right to a man" and will attempt to live every moment as Jesus Christ would. All of his prayers will be made with the

knowledge of God directing him. A real Christian will want what God wants and if he has any doubt, will strive to find exactly what is right from God's Word. The result is continual acknowledgement of his requests. Concrete answers to his prayers.

We Must Ask in Faith

In our modern-day society, thousands of people have real faith in the ability of a Don Meredith or Joe Namath to connect with their pass receiver on a touchdown play. The reason? They have seen them in action every Sunday afternoon on television. They have faithfully followed the statistics of the game and know what their favorite quarterback's ability is. *They know their man.*

These same people as well as most churchgoers would find it difficult to have a deep abiding assurance that the great Mastermind of all life's plays is capable of delivering their needs as they go through the game of life. The reason? We haven't been diligent in following our God. We don't know the statistics in the record book. We, and Christianity as a whole, haven't read and talked enough about the past performance record. **Too MANY OF US DON'T KNOW OUR GOD!**

How then can we expect Him to produce the desired result? Oftentimes we aren't too sure He exists. Or if we claim to know He exists, we frequently only *hope* we will receive an answer to prayer. Hope isn't enough.

"But 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" (Heb. 11:6). If we aren't sure He *is*, we certainly can't be sure He will grant our requests.

How then do you receive the faith which guarantees an answer? What is faith? Can we "drum it up" by thinking positively? Or do we sit back and wait for it to occur?

Faith is a product. It is the result of diligence in seeking God's will. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). When we diligently search the record book (God's Word), we learn of His past performance

and ability to deliver what He promises. The Bible shows how He has produced under pressure. There are hundreds of examples of past prayers which have been answered. This knowledge of past performance helps to produce a real assurance of what God will do.

THAT ASSURANCE IS FAITH!

"Now faith is the substance (margin renders it confidence or assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). In other words, faith is simply the knowledge and assurance that if what we are asking is in accord with God's way, we know He will answer.

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (I John 5:14-15).

This is the kind of faith which assures us of an answer to our prayers. Faith is the realization on our part of having met the requirements. It is the knowledge we will receive an answer one way or the other. But it doesn't mean we will receive a "yes" answer. Perhaps God's will for us is in the form of a negative reply. The prayer still has been answered. Real faith accepts *whatever* the answer may be knowing it is the right one.

We Must Ask

It sounds a little foolish to say that in order to receive an answer we must make a request. Yet such is the case. We don't expect people in this physical life to provide for our needs automatically without knowing the need. They would have to be mind readers, and more, to do it. Our Creator is just that — HE IS A MIND READER ! And what's more, He can supply the need. One of the numerous facets of His character is the quality of being "omniscient" or all-knowing. He knows our need before we ever ask (Matt. 6:8).

Why then do we have to bother to ask? Why doesn't God supply the need as He sees it?

First, we have to ask because we are told to. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight

and war, yet ye have not, BECAUSE YE ASK NOT. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3).

Second, God simply doesn't supply our needs automatically. As a loving Father, He wants His children to recognize their need. And He wants them to realize He is the One who can provide the need. If we automatically have our wants supplied for us, it is only a short time before we cease to appreciate the things given. Soon, we cease to appreciate the Giver. Any father enjoys providing good things for his children. In spite of the pleasure of providing for a loved one, a physical parent wants the child to realize who gave it. God is the same. He wants us to know our wishes are provided for by a loving, generous Father who is looking after our welfare. He wants us to realize that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

When we ask our spiritual Father for help, a job, health or welfare, we acknowledge Him as our Father. That acknowledgement brings honor to Him and helps us maintain a proper relationship with our Creator.

The fact remains that *we must ask* before we receive or can expect to receive an answer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: FOR EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Strange as it may sound, if you haven't received an answer to prayer, perhaps it is because you have never asked. Think about it for a minute. When was the last time you sincerely asked God to supply a particular need? If you aren't careful, you may be one who has limited your Father simply because you have never bothered to ask Him for your needs.

Must Be in Right Attitude

You have at some time or another asked for something in prayer. Everyone has. What was your attitude in asking? Was it

a demanding "give it to me now" attitude? Was it an "I don't think He will, but I'll ask anyway" attitude?

All of the points previously mentioned are summarized in one very basic scripture which epitomizes an overall proper attitude. This one scripture takes into account seeking God's will. It includes the other facets of asking in faith and in a proper manner because all these are necessary in order to have the right attitude. Yet it specifically points out the kind of man, woman or child God will answer. "... But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).

Poor? You mean we have to be in the lower strata economically speaking before God will hear our prayers? What about those people who have been blessed financially? Won't God answer their prayers?

The rest of the scripture explains what is meant by "poor." It is describing the attitude of humility and sincerity found in the true Christian. By speaking of a "contrite spirit," the writer is picturing the individual who deeply respects and holds in reverence and honor the God of the universe. Jesus Christ is said to have been heard and answered because He feared (Heb. 5:7). He wasn't in a continual state of trepidation.

Jesus knew the absolute majesty and the unimaginable power of His Father. He knew and fully understood the overwhelming consequence and penalty of sin and how sin could keep Him from ever rejoining His Father. He knew the holiness and righteousness of God's Law. As a result, He revered, honored, respected and loved His Father. He also feared being denied access to Him through disobedience. Therefore, He feared to sin.

We need to follow His perfect example. Real Godly fear is the beginning of wisdom. "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, *that is wisdom*; and TO DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING" (Job 28:28). The proper fear and respect for God causes us to depart from evil and to stop sinning.

If this is our basic attitude, we will be attempting to manifest all the other points previously mentioned. In addition,

we will make our requests and then patiently await whatever answer God sees fit to provide. We will know that the answer received will be the one which is best for us as a Christian.

Ask in Jesus' Name

There is one final point to remember in our communications with our Father. Without it all the other steps in prayer could become ineffectual. It is the key for tapping all the vast power of the universe and putting it at our disposal.

We should make our requests in the name of or by the *authority* of our elder brother Jesus Christ. "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **WHATSOEVER YE SHALL ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME, He will give it you.** Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and *ye shall receive*, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

Jesus gave an absolute guarantee which assures us of an answer to prayer when properly used. These promises were made to the disciples of Jesus who walked and talked daily with Him. They knew Him. They were familiar with and loved Him because they had talked by the hour about the everyday things of this physical life as well as the things of the World Tomorrow. Later when they prayed, they were sure He would see their prayers were answered because He was their Friend as well as their Saviour. He told them personally, "If you shall ask *any thing* in my name, I WILL DO IT" (John 14 :14) .

How about you? Are you really on speaking terms with your Creator and Saviour? If you are, you will be applying every one of these points and you will be receiving an answer to your prayers. Every one of these promises is ironclad for the real servants of Jesus Christ.

YES, GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYERS TODAY! He does provide concrete, demonstrable answers to those who truly serve Him. Are you receiving your share? If not, perhaps you are not approaching Him in a proper manner. Or perhaps you aren't as much of a Christian as you had thought. Apply these principles of prayer and you can correct and strengthen your lines of communication. God will do the rest.

The Answer to Unanswered Prayer *Tomorrow's World, June 1969*

HAS GOD gone "way off" somewhere? Why do the polished prayers of the preachers and politicians seem so *empty* and futile? *Why* don't they get RESULTS?

The fundamental reason why the prayers of most people – yes, even *ministers* – are *not* being answered today, is that they do not really *know* the true God. They think of God as a sort of vague, far-off, indefinable something. They know not the *true* God who is the *active, law-giving* RULER of the universe. They seem to forget that God *reveals* Himself in His Word, the Bible, and that He shows us the *kind* of God He is – that God informs us *how* we should OBEY Him, and what He has PROMISED to do for us.

Believe the Bible

Can we take *God's* Word literally? Does God *mean* what He says in it?

Jesus thought so. He said, "Thy word is TRUTH" (John 17:17). The apostles constantly taught and acted as if God's Word were *literally true*.

Who is right? Are you going to follow the differing ideas of *men*. or do you want to obey Jesus and live by *every word of God* (Matt. 4:4)?

To get RESULTS in your prayers, you should *believe in the God of the Bible*. Believe His Word is *truth*. And be willing to *act* on God's Word and His commands.

Free yourself from the hidebound traditions of this confused world and its "churchianity." *Seek* the true God in prayer. *Study* God's Word to find out His commandments and His promises. Then, *take God at His word!*

The Bible reveals *seven basic conditions* which you should fulfill to be certain of *answered prayers*.

What are they?

Seek God's Will

In James 4:1-4, the apostle showed that the children of this world – fighting and warring as they do – fail to receive help because they often neglect to ask God's help. And when they do, it is only to ask for their own selfish ends. To ask *selfishly* is to "ask amiss." You can expect *no answer* to such a prayer.

To get an answer, follow Jesus' example when He said, "I seek *not* mine own will, *but the will of the Father* which hath sent me" (John 5:30). But can you *know* God's will? "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

STUDY God's Word as Paul commanded Timothy (II Tim. 2:15). Then you will begin to think more as God thinks. You will come to *know* what God's will is in every circumstance. If you believe and know that God is *love*, that His will is for *our good*, then you will want to pray according to God's will.

You need not always have a specific promise in the Bible to know that something is God's will. Through experience and guidance, you will learn how to apply the *principles* of God's revealed will to any situation which may arise.

The point is that you must pray according to *God's* will to receive an answer. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we *know* that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:14-15). God's Word reveals that by fulfilling this *condition* you KNOW that God will answer your prayers!

Asking according to God's will is the *overall, fundamental condition* of answered prayer. All other conditions could be grouped under this one because they are the specific points of *God's will* in regard to prayer. The following six, together with and magnifying this first condition, will ensure *answered prayers*.

Believe God

Most people do not realize that a *lack of faith* is simply a *disbelief* that God will keep His promises or back up His Word. Have you ever thought of it that way?

God has *promised* to heal His children through the prayers of His ministers (James 5:14). If you *doubt* this promise, you are making God a *liar*!

Real FAITH is not an emotional "feeling" that you generate by thinking certain thoughts over and over. You don't "talk yourself into," or "think yourself into" real, believing faith. Godly faith is simply your willingness – through *God's* help – to quietly, patiently *trust* God to perform His Word. Abraham had that kind of faith. The apostle Paul wrote of him: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in *faith*, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21).

Abraham relied *completely* on God to perform His promises. Do you?

If you lack real *faith*, ask God to give it to you. Faith is one of the *gifts* of God's Holy Spirit.

James was inspired to write that a man *must* have faith to receive answers to his prayers (James 1:5-7) . A man who *wavers* will not receive an answer. "For let not *that* man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (verse 7).

God has made hundreds of promises in His Word which we can claim. Healing is just one of them. When you are sick, do you obey God's command to "call for the elders of the church"?

Do you *completely* TRUST God to keep His promise to *heal*, although consulting a doctor for help and advice as to *what physical law you are breaking*? If you really believe God will heal, then *trust* Him to do it! Faith without works is *dead* (James 2:20). To have answered prayers, you must have *faith* – and you must *act* on that faith !

Be Fervent

It is common in our day for parents to teach their children memorized prayers. The father often mumbles a hurried, routine prayer of thanks at the table. The minister either reads or recites from memory an eloquent prayer which *sounds* very impressive.

Is God impressed?

The "fruits" show that God rarely hears such prayers, for they are usually *not answered*.

This is so because people don't put their *hearts* into their prayers (Hosea 7:14). They don't "cry out" to God with their whole being as the ancient prophets did – and as Christ did when He prayed.

On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus needed strength from God for the coming ordeal. He needed to get really close to God. He knelt down and began to pray that *God's* will, not His own, would be done. "And being in an agony he prayed more *earnestly*: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). He prayed *earnestly* – with all His heart.

In James 5:16, we read, "The effectual FERVENT prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We have to pray *fervently, earnestly, zealously*, if we expect God to hear.

Put your *whole heart* into your prayers!

Fear and Humility

Modern man has a cocksure, self-sufficient attitude and thinks he can get along fine without God. He neither fears God nor respects God's Word as an *authority* in his life. He is vain, egotistical, self-important.

Is it a wonder that God fails to answer the prayers of such men?

The very *first* prerequisite to a knowledge of God is to fear Him and respect His Word. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10).

Carnal man needs to realize that he is only *dust* and shall return to the dust unless and until he receives the Spirit of God, which is the begettal to eternal life. Eternal life is *a gift* from

God (Rom. 6:23), not something we already have. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then *vanisheth away*" (James 4:14).

We need to *fear* God, realizing that our lives are in His hands. We should be humble, realizing that any gifts or talents we may have are ours *because God gave them to us*.

When we can approach our Creator in *that* attitude – respecting His power and authority over our lives – then He will hear our prayers.

When Christ was in the human flesh, even He feared God as we should. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that *he feared*" (Heb 5:7). When we fully realize our own *helplessness*, then we will cry out to God as we should.

Peter wrote "be clothed with *humility*: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5).

The attitude of *humility* and *godly fear* is vital in prayer, and at *all times*.

Be Persistent

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus spoke a parable to teach us that we should always pray, and never give up hope. He showed that even an unrighteous judge would finally hear the pleas of a widow who *kept coming to him*. So we should keep praying to God, *even though He doesn't answer right away*.

God has made many promises in His Word. But He has *nowhere* said that He will perform them at the *time*, or in the *way* that we choose. Sometimes it is very good for us not to have our prayers answered immediately. God is building patient *faith* into our characters.

James was inspired to write, "the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3) . If God doesn't answer your prayers immediately, exercise *patience* and keep praying until He does answer.

Don't nag at God. He has supreme wisdom to know *when* and *how* would be best to answer your prayers. But if you have prayed as you should, He WILL answer. God *always* keeps His

promises! So be *persistent*. Keep praying in faith, and God is *bound* to perform His part.

Obedience

A sixth condition of answered prayer is one which is neglected and violated consistently by most professing "Christians." This hinges directly on the before-mentioned fact that very few people today really know the true God. People do not look to God as the AUTHORITY in their lives. Instead, they make a "god" out of this world's society and its customs, traditions, and religious practices.

God inspired Paul to write, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to *obey*, his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16). If you obey the ways of sin practiced in this world, you are putting this society and its pagan customs *in the place of the true God!*

God wants more than "lip service." He requires OBEDIENCE !

If you haven't learned to fear the true God and accept His Word as the *authority* in your life, then you don't even really *know* God. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is *a liar*, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

How can men persistently refuse to keep God's commandments, and then expect Him to answer their prayers? Peter answers, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Peter 3:12).

Sin is simply breaking God's Law (I John 3:4). God will *not* hear the prayers of those who persist in sin – in evil. If people would obey God, they would get *answers* when they pray. Then God wouldn't seem so far away, so unreal – as He probably does to most of *you?* Think it over. Then *do something about it.*

Does God ever hear the prayers of the unconverted? Yes, He does. God himself has blinded the eyes of many to the truth at this time (Rom. 11:7-8). It is His *responsibility* that they

don't know the truth yet. So God does sometimes hear and answer the prayers of those who *obey as far as they know*.

The lepers and cripples who came to Jesus to be healed didn't know all of God's truth. But they did realize that Jesus was sent from God and could heal. And *they acted on what they knew*. So it is a matter of your *heart* or *attitude*. If you come to God in a humble, repentant spirit and are determined to obey Him *to the best of your knowledge*, He will hear your prayers. But this is *no excuse* for anyone who knows the truth to disobey God!

True Christians can have a special confidence that God *will answer* their prayers *if* they are OBEDIENT. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Make Your Prayers Count ***Good News, August 1985***

Prayer is not an isolated and optional religious exercise. It is a vital factor, significant in determining our eternal destiny!

The supreme purpose that God is working out here on earth is the expansion of His Kingdom — His Family. He wants to make out of human beings immortal members of His ruling Family.

These must be individuals who, by their own free choice, come to fully support God's way of doing things, who want to think as God thinks, perceive as God perceives, react as God reacts. They must want with all their hearts to be involved in whatever God is doing.

Such an attitude is essential in order to maintain, throughout eternity, harmony and peace in the God Family.

God has made us temporarily human. This existence is a testing ground so our Creator can try us and know what is in our hearts, whether or not He can trust us to live by His rules and laws (Deuteronomy 8:2). He must be sure. He is looking at us, closely examining our actions and reactions.

God takes note of what we say when we are talking to Him. Of course He knows our hearts and intents. And the Holy Spirit helps where we cannot adequately express ourselves (Romans 8:26-27). Still, as Jesus showed, the actual words we use are also important, and they ought to be meaningful, rather than vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7).

One of the obstacles to effective prayer is not often identified: It is the fact that we live in the age of devalued language. Words have never been so cheap, so frequently meaningless. All around us language is misused in advertising, politics, entertainment and casual conversation.

Because we have been disillusioned more than once by broken promises, exaggerations, shading of the truth, even outright lies, we have come to automatically doubt that words mean what their face value would indicate.

This is one reason some have difficulty believing God's promises. It also could be one of the reasons some prayers are not as effective as they should be.

Remember that God really didn't have to ask Adam and Eve the series of questions about what they had done (Genesis 3:9-13). He already knew the answer. He didn't have to ask Cain where Abel was (Genesis 4:9). He didn't have to come down to earth to verify how evil Sodom was (Genesis 18:20-21). He didn't have to allow Jacob to contend with him all night (Genesis 32:22-30). But He wanted to — and wants to — hear from humans themselves what they have to say, and see their reactions.

Prayer changes things

The great Creator God is working out His plan. He keeps it on course, intervening when necessary in human affairs to do so. But do you realize that He allows humans with whom He is dealing to determine many of the details of how His plan develops?

Twice, Moses directly influenced, by prayer, the course of history. Because of the rebellion of the children of Israel, God on two separate occasions proposed rejecting them all and bringing forth through Moses a new nation to inherit the

promises made to Abraham (Exodus 32:9-14, Numbers 14:11-20). Had Moses not fervently prayed to God to change His mind, the implication is that God would have done exactly what He had proposed.

Either way would not have impeded the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan. But Moses' prayers did determine the course that fulfillment took.

Prayer does make a difference. It changes things.

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest," Jesus urged (Luke 10:2). Whether or not or in what numbers laborers are sent out to do God's work must therefore depend at least partly on prayers or the lack of them.

Make no mistake about it: God will accomplish His work of preaching the message preparing the world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ — even if He has to cause the very rocks of the earth to cry the message out loud (Luke 19:40). Let us not take for granted the privilege we have of taking part in what God is doing! He doesn't need us. But He gives us the opportunity to participate. Are you participating?

Listen to the apostle Paul: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (I Timothy 2:1-2). Whether or not or to what degree God's work has peaceful conditions in which to function also depends therefore, at least in part, on how diligently we pray.

If we don't ask, there is no promise we shall receive.

Do you pray every day for the work of God and for the human instruments carrying it out? You should. Do you pray every day for God's blessings on others as well as on your own endeavors? You should. Do you pray every day for protection and help as you function and move about in this evil and dangerous world? You should.

"Be anxious for nothing," Paul wrote, "but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known [even though God is already aware] to God"

(Philippians 4:6). This means bringing God into every — yes, every — facet of your daily existence.

Believe and obey

Jesus said, "And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22). So in addition to simply asking, we must believe. There is a definite and close relationship between the degree of one's sincerity and surrender to God and the degree to which one is able to believe and pray in faith.

If you are, for example, lusting for something when you know better, if your mind is entertaining thoughts you know you should not have, you automatically cannot at the same time be asking God in unswerving faith to grant you a request. It just doesn't work that way.

Here's how the apostle John expressed it: "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God" (I John 3:21). And our hearts won't condemn us if we are doing what is right. "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (verse 22).

What does it mean to be always in an attitude of prayer? It doesn't mean you are talking to God every second. Even Jesus didn't do that. But He was always in the right attitude — His conscience was undefiled before God — so He could talk directly to His heavenly Father on the spur of the moment. His thoughts were on those things that are above.

Being able to pray at any moment and total surrender to God go hand in hand. On one occasion when Jesus suddenly began to pray, He said: "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me" (John 11:41-42).

How did Jesus know that? Why did God always hear Him? For the simple reason that Jesus always did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29).

Wanting to pray or be in an attitude of prayer in "all things" is actually a valuable incentive to be obedient in all things.

Prayers of intercession

Our prayer life not only reveals to God how deeply we want Him to be involved in our lives and how deeply we want to be involved in what He is doing, but prayer also shows how interested we are in other people.

In all members of God's Family, God wants to see a spontaneous and universal expression of outgoing concern for the welfare of others. That's the only way to guarantee peace and harmony. It is the way of giving. Love for one's neighbor is the very essence of God's law (Leviticus 19:18).

One of the greatest gifts you can give to others, when you are close to God, is to pray for them. God loves it when people pray for each other. Certainly God will hear the prayers of an individual praying for his own needs. But the Bible leaves no doubt that God particularly enjoys hearing and answering the prayers of one person for the needs of another.

The apostle Paul wouldn't have petitioned the saints to "pray for us" (Hebrews 13:18) if it didn't make any difference whether they did.

If you want a specific request from God, have you ever thought to pray that the identical request be granted to someone else who needs it? In so doing, you get your mind off yourself and on the welfare of others. This is well pleasing to God.

In Jesus' sample prayer outline (commonly, though mistakenly, called the "Lord's Prayer") the words *I*, *me* or *my* do not appear once (Matthew 6:9-13). All the way through the words used are *we*, *us* and *our*, demonstrating an unselfish concern.

God wants to hear prayer of intercession (Isaiah 59:15-16). It was through the prayers of Abraham that Abimelech was forgiven (Genesis 20:17-18). Job's friends were forgiven through Job's prayers (Job 42:7-10). John wrote about praying for one another to be forgiven (I John 5:16). The Bible records numerous instances of people praying for one another.

For whom have you interceded recently?

In Jesus' early childhood, there was an elderly woman named Anna, "who did not depart from the temple, but served

God [the word *God* is in italics to show it was added by translators] with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).

You can be sure that most of that prayer and fasting was not to seek Anna's own needs and desires. There were probably many people in the area who, over the years, went to Anna when they had a problem, because God heard and answered her prayers and everyone knew it.

King Solomon recorded a vital principle in life that reflects on this subject: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

You who are sick or afflicted, is someone praying *with* you for healing? The instruction from James is to "pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16). It makes a difference!

Vital Keys to Fervent Prayer ***Good News, June 1983***

Why have the psalms of King David of ancient Israel consoled and elated thousands of people through the centuries?

Psalms 72:20 tells us: These scriptures record David's intensely fervent prayers!

David's psalms are enduring literary masterpieces, filled with David's moving, memorable statements to and about God: "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 33:12).

Yet why do some consider these ageless classics irrelevant today? After all, David's prayers are no mere empty

speculations of an armchair theologian. Those who've studied them know better.

The psalms of David unashamedly expose a real man's man, an earnest soldier-poet, a courageous giant-killer, a passionate leader who was plunged repeatedly into difficulties and disappointments (Ps. 18:4-5).

The psalms reveal a lionhearted leader who, harried by painful physical and emotional distress, nevertheless turned setbacks into songs of praise to his Creator, emotion-etched expressions of faith in God's ultimate deliverance (Ps. 27:1).

We, too, can learn to pray as David prayed (Rom. 15:4) — to become, as he was, a person after God's own heart (Acts 13:22)!

David was tested

David knew bitter testing (Ps. 22:14). Here was a man projected into a life of turmoil, harrowing escapes, chilling scrapes with death and near-fatal encounters. He was a fugitive king, a bandit leader (I Sam. 22:2), a roamer of the badlands. It was undeserved, unfair and there wasn't a thing he could do about it.

This probing of his innermost character forced David to his knees often (Ps. 55:17). David endured through thick and thin. He persevered tenaciously in prayer because he knew he must — he knew that God was, literally, his only hope (Ps. 56:1).

No false humility permeated David's prayers, no self-righteous pretense. God allowed His servant to fall into life-threatening situations again and again. David's needs were urgent and real! Utter sincerity spilled out as he pleaded for God's intervention:

"Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord! ... Let them be turned back because of their shame, who say, 'Aha, aha!' ["We have him now!"].... But I am poor and needy; make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay" (Ps. 70:1, 3, 5).

Do we look to man?

Why don't people pray like that today? Haven't we been subtly brainwashed by generations of so-called progress to seek man's help, not God's?

Miracle drugs, heart transplants, laser surgery, central heating and air conditioning, instant foods, womb-to-tomb socialism — all the amazing developments of the 20th century have bewitched us with man's powers and ingenuity (Jer. 17:5). We look to man to deliver us (Ps. 118:8).

How tragic! Even in the face of an ominously darkening world situation, mankind is still too trusting in human prowess to fall to its knees and supplicate the God of David for help (Rev. 9:21).

In fact, the last era of God's Church in this age is prophesied to fall victim to this tragic shortsightedness, the spiritual blindness that pushes God's awesome power to the back of the mind (Rev. 3:14-17).

Many of us in God's Church now are blessed with incredible affluence compared to the world average. Yet God warns, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. 1:32, Authorized Version). No wonder God allows trials, tests and hazards to befall even His people. David understood: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19).

How may we of this generation recapture David's sense of urgent need, the fervency to power our prayers with zeal?

"Ask, and it will be given"

Try the self-imposed crisis of fasting. Fasting hurts (Lev. 23:27). It takes stamina and dedication. We are more aware that all power traces back to God. Solid time spent in meditating on these basics stimulates us to seek the God who sustains the whole universe (Heb. 1:3).

Studying Bible prophecy is another way to rekindle a sense of urgency. Such descriptive passages as Deuteronomy 28:67, Ezekiel 5:12 and Revelation 16:20 can alarm us to the horrifying fate a heedless world is speeding toward.

This dying civilization's only hope is the good news of the world tomorrow. Our calling is to proclaim this to the nations (Matt. 24:14). We need to ask God, in fervent prayer, to mold us as future kings and priests so we can aid in the great reconstruction He is planning (Luke 21:36).

Reports of people in difficult circumstances also help jar complacency. We are reminded that "the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (Rom. 8:22).

Perhaps now we can deeply grasp why God allows trials — why our healing is sometimes delayed — why those suffering for years with diseases serve a vital role inside the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:26).

Yes, sudden emergencies and fatal catastrophes sometimes overtake God's people. It spurs prayer and fasting, fervent spiritual wrestling on our knees, and it is this that slowly changes us into God's own image (Col. 4:12).

Sometimes people ask, "Why do we have to beseech God if He knows everything in advance?"

Remember, only God can give us what we all ultimately need: eternal life in spirit bodies (I Cor. 15:44), supernatural protection from the evils and accidents that could afflict us, miraculous healing when our loved ones are sick, the molding of our attitudes to bring them in line with God's happy and positive outlook, the special help to aid in "bringing every thought into captivity" (II Cor. 10:5), the peace of mind to break the shackles of discouragement and depression.

Is anything else more important? Yet why should God give us aid and support if we don't ask Him diligently (Heb. 11:6)?

Notice Luke 11:9-12: "And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"

But what if he asks for a scorpion, or doesn't ask at all? Why would any father feel obligated if a child doesn't politely but correctly press home a request?

Prayer is one of the main tools to help build God's character within us. If God does everything for us without our active cooperation, then are we not denied free moral agency, no longer co-workers with God (I Cor. 3:9)?

We can change God's mind

Never underestimate the importance of prayer. We can change God's mind. Moses did (Ex. 32:9-14). So did Hezekiah (II Kings 20:5) and Ahab (I Kings 21:29).

Here's how it works: It is futile to petition God to do something inconsistent with His nature or against His will (Num. 23:19). He cannot be dissuaded from His overall purposes — the 7,000-year plan, the return of Christ, the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Lev. 26).

Yet there are many areas within the parameters of God's plan where His mind is not fully settled (I Kings 22:20). Here we may exercise free choice, give suggestions, outline alternate plans and proposals to God Himself, press home specific needs.

Sound incredible? Not at all. Amos did it. Notice an important encounter between the fiery prophet and the great God he served. The background? God was trying to decide how best to punish Israel. He reacted to the advice of this dedicated man of God. Notice it in Amos 7:1-6:

"Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms ... And so it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: 'O Lord God, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!' So the Lord relented concerning this. 'It shall not be,' said the Lord. Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, the Lord God called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. Then I said: 'O Lord God, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!' So the Lord relented concerning this. 'This also shall not be,' said the Lord God."

Amazing, isn't it? Amos' tender concern changed God's mind twice and prevented great calamities from befalling Israel.

Finally, in Amos 7:8, God settled in His mind the final decision. Yet Amos had an influence, possibly a decisive one. God promised that Israel would revive after a horrible captivity (Amos 9:8).

The lesson is obvious. God promises us healing, yet the timing depends upon God's purposes in our lives and our urgent persevering and wrestling (Luke 18:1).

God opens doors of broadcasting and television, by which this Work fulfills its commission to preach the Gospel to the world (Matt. 24:14). But the number and effectiveness of the outlets may be affected by our burning interest to call God's attention to special needs in our area (Jas. 4:2).

It's the same with new coworkers and donors responding to the Work. God views prayer as part of our responsibility to beseech Him to more effectively bless His own Work (Jer. 48:10).

God's Work can be hindered by lack of interceding, believing prayer. Scripture is eminently clear: Whenever God's people are seriously and earnestly motivated to petition for divine help in time of desperate need, stand back! Colossal events transpire: "They raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them ... Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.' And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:24, 29:31).

There is fervency. There is zeal. There also is a powerful answer to prayer.

God's servants prayed fervently

Oh, how the great men and women of the Bible would condemn our "laid-back," mellow generation! This degenerate age has elevated noninvolvement to a cliché — "Do your own thing." Looking out for number one is a catch-phrase. "Stay cool" is the byword; if the pressure is on, detach yourself, do your thing to cool off, don't sweat it.

The great heroes of the Bible were anything but cool and detached. They were men and women of magnificently deep feelings and emotions, and splendidly unafraid to show them.

It is recorded seven times that Joseph wept. Moses fasted for 40 days and nights, so wrapped up was he in receiving God's revelations (Ex. 34:28). Joshua fell to the dust and lay on his face all day to depict his horror when Israel had lost God's favor (Josh. 7:6-10). Ruth left her homeland to follow Naomi, and would not hear of turning back from the God of Israel (Ruth 1:18).

Samuel cried all night at the news that God would reject unsteady King Saul (I Sam. 15:11). David fasted for men who had opposed him because, even in opposition, David saw their potential (II Sam. 1:12, 3:32). Anna the prophetess stayed at her post and served God with fastings when she was more than 100 years of age (Luke 2:36-37).

Jesus Christ petitioned God all night before He chose His 12 apostles (Luke 6:12-13), while the apostle Paul dictated corrective letters to young churches with tears streaming down his face (II Cor. 2:4).

Here is David pleading and respectfully bargaining with God, his only succour in the savage Judean wilderness. Note the sincerity, the all-or-nothing integrity that sped David's appeals to God via "special delivery":

"O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:) let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust" (Ps. 7:3-5, AV).

The kind of prayer God's Church needs

Pretty bold, pretty direct, wouldn't you say (Heb. 4:16)? David marshals a strong argument for God's protection, saying, in effect: "If I've treated them like they're treating me, God, you can let them grind me in the dust. But I've done nothing to them. In this matter I am innocent. Please help me!"

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."

Regretfully, true friendship and openness are so rare today that people walk encased in shells, largely shut off from each other. This can carry over into our spiritual relationship with God. We can feel too out of touch with our emotions to even open up with our heavenly Father.

Yet I John 1:9 promises: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We must confess our specific sins to God. We will not sense the relief that can be ours until we lay our cares on God's shoulders (I Pet. 5:7). God offers to forgive all our sins (Matt. 12:31).

David was specific, open and honest in his prayers. He knew that God intimately knew every detail of his life (Ps. 56:8). He'd might as well confess, come clean, on his knees before God. Even to honestly let off steam over his dishonorable, conniving enemies was better than self-deception. He knew that he couldn't fool God (Ps. 139:21-24).

By wrestling with his thoughts, attitudes and emotions in prayer and hammering his mind into godly reactions, David pleased God greatly. So can we, if we discern our gigantic spiritual need, if we grasp that only God can provide that need.

These are elements of fervent prayer, the kind of prayer God's people will need as we enter the final strenuous days of God's Work (II Tim. 3:1). Study the scriptures quoted here. There is a prayer to match every mood and outlook. Seek them out. Treasure them. Rise to the challenge in the book of James:

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas. 5:16).

Why Pray – Lead Us Not Into Temptation *Plain Truth, January 1985*

Does God lead humans into temptation? If not, why pray that God won't? This question has perplexed many, including theologians.

IN JAMES 1:13 we read: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

But in Genesis 22:1 we also read, "And it came to pass... that God did tempt Abraham.... " Here is certainly an apparent contradiction! Does God ever tempt one to do evil? If not, why pray, "Lead us not into temptation"?

And what about the verse that says, "...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"? (Jas. 1:2).

How are these apparently contradictory scriptures to be understood?

Sore Trial

The word *temptation* is a very unfortunate translation that occurs in older English versions of the Bible. In modern usage, temptation has the meaning of enticement to do evil. But that is not the primary intent of either the Hebrew or Greek words. In most instances a better translation into English is "hard test" or "sore trial."

We see this, for example, in Revelation 3:10, where the word in question appears. Speaking of the coming period of worldwide distress, Jesus makes a promise to those who obey him: "I also will keep thee from the hour of *temptation*, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here the word *temptation* is better translated "sore trial" or "tribulation."

Likewise, the request "Lead us not into temptation" should be rendered "Lead [or bring] us not into sore trial."

But what did Christ mean by *that*?

Jesus himself, the night before his crucifixion, gave us an example of what he meant by "lead us not into sore trial." He was aware of the intense suffering he was about to undergo. He could see it coming. He realized that if he failed during the trials of the next twelve hours or so, God's whole plan for the redemption of mankind would fail also.

Jesus was deeply troubled. He prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup [of suffering] pass from me [in other words, "Lead me not into sore trial!"]: nevertheless," he added, "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Yes, as Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:10, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Maybe there was some other way of working out God's plan of redemption. Jesus asked, if so, to be spared being brought into the grievously sore test just ahead — but only *if* it was God's will.

It was not.

It is not always God's will to keep us out of sore trial either. Sometimes we become lax in doing our part to develop righteous character, and we need a hard test to bring us to our senses. God may allow us to experience trials to get us back "on the track."

Our Part

A Christian is one who asks to be led by God each day, for the Eternal says, "I am the Lord thy God which... leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isa. 48:17). When we see a trial looming on the horizon, rather than being overcome with anxiety about it, we can ask God, *if it is his will*, to lead us past it, around it, over it, any other direction but *into* it! If we are alert and close to God, we may be delivered from the trial before we become completely involved in it. "Watch [be alert!] and pray," Jesus urged his disciples, "that ye *enter not* into temptation [sore trial]" (Matt. 26:41).

Jesus' entire prayer outline as given in Matthew 6:9-13 is based on the premise that those praying are doing their part to fulfill God's plan. The request, "Give us this day our daily bread" (verse 11), assumes the requester is doing what he can

to produce and earn his daily bread. He is not just sitting still, waiting for the bread to somehow be handed to him. Receiving forgiveness of sins (verse 12) also depends upon whether we do our part — forgiving others. Similarly, the petition "Lead us not into sore trial" assumes the person praying is diligently straightening out his own life so God might not have to straighten it out for him.

When God allows sore trials to come upon us it is for our own good — to wake us up, to teach us lessons. If we are learning those lessons by ourselves, we are much further ahead. Notice how the verb form of the same word we are translating "sore trial" is used in II Corinthians 13:5: "*Examine* [test! try!] yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

Then God won't have to do it for you!

Jeremiah recognized that God does find it necessary to try his people. He prayed, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:24). In other words, he asked to be corrected, but preferably without being brought into overly severe trial.

The Bible refers to hard trials as "fiery trials" (I Pet. 4:12). Being sorely tried is not naturally enjoyable. As Peter wrote to Christians: "...now for a season, *if need be*, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [sore trials]" (I Pet. 1:6). However, he points out in the next verse, the results of being so tried are "more precious than of gold."

Though we may be severely tried, we have the promise that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [tried] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [sore trial] also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

"All things work together for good to them that love God," the Bible asserts (Rom. 8:28). Realizing that God's will is always best, James exhorted: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [sore trials]" (Jas. 1:2).

When Trials Involve Temptations

Many have wondered about Genesis 22:1, which says, "And it came to pass... that God did *tempt* Abraham." What

follows is the familiar account of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar in obedience to God's instructions. God wanted to test Abraham's faith. There was no question of deceit here, for we have already seen that "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man [with evil]" (Jas. 1:13).

A better rendering of Genesis 22:1 is, "And it came to pass... that God did prove [or sorely try] Abraham."

Sometimes, however, temptation to do evil does become a part of sore trial. This is illustrated by what happened to ancient Israel. God had told them to "remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove ["sorely try" — same word wrongly translated "tempt" in Genesis 22:1] thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deut. 8:2).

Here again God was doing the testing. But this time sin *was* involved, for the Israelites rebelled against their Creator. They yielded to temptation to sin. Where did the temptation come from? From God? No. God does not tempt to do evil. Where then? From their own lusts, because "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin..." (Jas. 1:14-15).

God did not test them with more than they could have withstood — if they had been willing to do their part.

To make matters worse, human lusts are constantly stirred up by Satan and his influence. He is called the "tempter" (Matt. 4:3). He tempts to do evil (Mark 1:13). This brings us to another facet of the meaning of Jesus' teaching.

"Lead us not into sore trial" is immediately followed by "but deliver us from evil," or as it can be translated, "but deliver us from the evil one." As Jesus was instructing his disciples how to pray, it was fresh in his mind that he himself had recently been led into hard testing when the devil tried, literally, to tempt him to do evil. "Then was Jesus *led* up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted* [sorely tried] of the

devil" (Matt. 4:1). Here again sore trial included temptation to do evil. But the temptation was of the devil, not of God.

In this fateful encounter with Satan, the ruler of the present world, Jesus prevailed. He overcame Satan, thus qualifying to be King over the earth.

We must overcome Satan too, though God does not permit the devil to try us as severely as he tried Jesus. Whenever we do not resist Satan (Jas. 4:7), we provide opportunity for him to tempt us (I Cor. 7:5). It is even possible for a church member to so neglect putting sin out of his life that, to wake him up, God will give him over to Satan for some sore trying. That's what the apostle Paul referred to when he instructed the church at Corinth under his charge to "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:5).

We should pray that we do not have to be tried in that way.

God is working out his purpose in our lives. He tests and tries us as needed to develop righteous character in us. The more perfect God's Spirit in us enables us to become, the fewer trials will be necessary. When we pray, "Lead us not into sore trial, but deliver us from evil," we are asking God to perfect us and bring us to the place where such trials are not needed.

We are here to help! Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions. Our address is: Faithful Church of God in Laodicea, P.O. Box 31135, Edmond, Oklahoma 73003, USA. Email: mail@menofsign.org. Our web address is: www.menofsign.org