

Out Of The Abundance Of Your Prayers Your Heart Speaks

Additional Purposes of Prayer

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We, of all the people on the earth through the calling of God the Father and the tremendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son, have the opportunity to come right to the very throne of our Father in prayer. And because of this, we should always give thought to *how* we come before Him.

Matthew 12 tells us, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," or the mind that controls our action and that "the good man out of the good treasure of his heart will bring forth good treasure, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things." Now we all know this, and because of this, we are very careful about what we say. We try and be careful because He said that "we shall give account of every word we speak in the day of judgment and thus by our word shall we be justified and by our words shall we be condemned."

Now indeed we know this scripture and we work to watch our tongue, as I said. And it says in James 3:2, if any man stumbles not in the word, the same man is perfect. I know that most of you are perfect, but I know that I am not because we all stumble in the word and we regret it at times.

Have you ever considered applying this principle a little differently in the area of our coming before God? That out of the abundance or lack of abundance of our prayers, our heart speaks. Do we stumble in the word when we pray? Do we deeply consider what we say to God, telling Him why a certain prayer is important? Do we break it down small and say this is why this prayer should be answered, Father, rather than just going through it by rote.

Do we take time to consider how we should present ourselves to God? And the attitude we come with as we present ourselves to Him?

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Now though we may not consider it a blessing, it truly is. God knows every thought, every intent of our heart, and that is truly a blessing. Because when we understand this, we understand that when we pray, or as we pray, we should be perfectly open with God and honest because He knows who we are and what we are in every fiber of our being.

Certainly you can read this for yourself in Romans 8:27 where He said that He searches the heart and in Psalm 139:4 where He says He knows every word we speak, that words are prompted by, well, in fact, He knows every fiber of our being. He sees the tender feelings that we have toward the plight of others on the prayer list and our desire to help. He sees the patience and the true outgoing concern we have for our brethren in the church and our love and concern for them, and He sees our sighing and crying for the condition of all people in this world.

He knows the hatreds that we sometimes carry and the wrong desires that plague us, or the attitude of condemning others we sometimes have and our desire to get even. He sees it all. He sees the times when we seem to be self-centered and to justify ourselves in doing what we want as opposed to doing what is right.

God loves us so much and cares for us so much, and He has such a future in store for us that He has to take time to notice us and to know what we are about. He also sees our attitude in approaching His throne. Do we consider that time to be of great value and approach His throne with love and appreciation and genuineness of a desire to be there, or just sort of putting in our time, which I think probably all of us do at times.

You see, God is shaping us for future offices that He has in store for us, and He learns a great deal about us as we come before Him in our prayers and in our thoughts, and He indeed wants to give thought to what we are asking of Him, but He is always going to consider our heart and our attitude in His response.

Now, have you ever considered that if we pray as God wishes, that our prayers will help us to shape our character to become like His?

We are going to look at four scriptures here. The first one is Matthew 5. Sure, there are a lot more scriptures that we could look at, but we will take this one, Matthew 5, for a start here. It is one of these difficult things that He expects us to do.

Matthew 5:43-45 "You have heard that it has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [Whole new concept here.] But [Jesus Christ says to us] I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you [why?], that you may be the sons of your Father [and take on His nature and His attitude] in heaven; for He makes the sun rise upon the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

This admonition is directly from Jesus Christ to pray for those who have mistreated us or they do not think like we do or whatever, in whatever manner. And this truly goes against human nature and takes thought and genuine concern to pray for one's enemy. Praying for soundness of thinking and working to make sure that you do not harm that individual is difficult and yet in preparing us for the future, this is what God wants from us.

Now the apostle Paul was faced with difficult personalities, with problems of all sorts, with trials, personal attacks, and yet he understood what Jesus Christ wanted for His people. And thus he kept his prayers, his thoughts, and his goals the same as those of Jesus Christ for God's people.

We will see that in Philippians 1, verses 9 through 11. I am going to read this from the New English Bible. Touching, touching prayer. This is how Paul thinks.

Philippians 1:9-11 (NEB) This is my prayer, that your love may grow richer and richer in the knowledge and insight of every kind, and may thus bring you the gift of true discrimination [understanding]. Then on the day of Jesus Christ you will be flawless [He is approaching this, he wants God's people flawless.] and without blame, reaping the full harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and the praise of God.

Were the people in the Philippian church perfect? No, they were not. Were there no problems? And yet Paul looked over the top of the small things and focused on the goal that Jesus Christ had for each of the members of His church, for the family that He is building, and he prayed accordingly for them, that they would grow and prosper and reach the fullness and the stature of Christ. And when we follow Paul's example, our sights are lifted off the petty things that tend to confront us and are realigned to focus on the attention of what Christ wants for each person in His body.

Paul further instructs us about the ministry. Colossians 4, verses 2 through 4. He says,

Colossians 4:2-4 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

In verse 2, Paul is telling us not to neglect prayer. We will see why in a few minutes. And be aware of the opportunities that require prayer. He goes on to say, watch your mind that you might be in the right frame of thought when you pray, and be thankful, not forgetting this important work that belongs to you, to each one of us. And then in verses 3 and 4, Paul says, pray with all supplication, and as you pray for others, pray for us, the ministry, that God would open a way to present God's Word to others. And Paul must indeed have been pretty frustrated at being confined and not being free to do what God wants him to do.

Now the example for us today is to pray for all the men that speak to us that we might grow, obtaining the understanding that each of us individually must have, that God wants us to have to become like Him. And when we pray, we should realize that these messages go out not to just our individual age group because we have people who say, well, I've heard that before, you know, or this and that, we should not be that way. Not to our individual age group, but to other members of our congregation, as well as going out to the world. A message that might seem old hat to us or not really be needed may be brand new to some of the newer members, some of the younger members. And thus we must expand our mind and prayers to include them and to

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realize how important these messages are to those that perhaps have not heard it before. And to those on the tape program plus those who take term sermons off the website.

Thus prior to Sabbath, some time toward the end of the week, we should humbly pray with deep appreciation for whomsoever is speaking, that God might guide his message and asking that we and all hearing the message might receive what Jesus Christ wants to be gained from the sermon or the sermonette being given. And I think all of you realize that we do not all gain the same things out of a message. We all get something different many times.

I have got to tell you this is an attitude and a prayer that will greatly please and glorify God. And it will just please Him to pieces.

Now for the final scripture, James 5, verses 16 through 20.

James 5:16-20 Confess your trespasses [or your faults] to one another, and pray for one another, that you all may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [he was a human being], and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns the sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

The overall command here is to pray for one another. And the inference seems to say to pray for those that are sick, but James does instruct us to confess your trespasses, but that does not mean that we should stand up here or get in the crowd and say I'm an alcoholic or I lust for this, so we have that down pat. But it does mean that you, if you have a close trusted friend that you can depend on, that you can go to that friend and say, "Look, I'm having a real problem in this area. And I need your prayers." And he keeps it silent. And he prays for you and he asks God to intervene on your behalf.

The overall sense is that we are to pray for one another. We may have noticed someone struggling in the congregation with a problem, and rather

than sharing this with the rest of the congregation, we can go home and quietly get on our knees and say, Father, this person needs my help. He has this problem. He has been fighting it. And God is going to be pleased with that. And to think why that person should be healed of this problem and the future, all of that.

Now the Jews had a saying, "He who prays surrounds his house with a wall stronger than iron. Penitence can do something, but prayer can do everything."

To them, prayer was nothing less than contacting the power of God. It was the channel through which the strength and grace of God were brought to bear on the troubles and problems of life. Prayer was exceedingly, exceedingly important.

So James goes through the end of the chapter demonstrating the power of a man's prayers, and then goes on to tell us that if one man strays from the truth, but one turns him back, and I will say with the effort of prayer, not just counseling, but with prayer as well, the one that applies himself seriously to help his brother or sister shall save him from the Lake of Fire and shall cover a multitude of his own sins. Very important.

Brethren, there are many examples of a right prayer pattern for one to follow in the Bible. In Psalms, many, many good prayers to follow an example from, and in the rest of the Bible as well. Daniel, Solomon for Israel, all of these things, fine examples. And these help us to develop the mind and the character of God in us. And it prepares us for the dealing with those who need our attention now and as instruction in the Millennium and in the World Tomorrow.

So let us remember, then, that out of the abundance of our prayers, our heart does indeed speak. Let each one of us work to have that right abundance that we might please and glorify God.