

Sunday, April 28, 2024 am

## COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (12)

### Prayer and Faith

We are continuing our study of prayer as part of our 2024 theme. We have addressed God's part in prayer and noted examples in scripture of those who prayed. Last week we began HOW to pray. In this section we are noting not only what scripture says about this, but also giving practical application concerning prayer in our lives (our "prayer life").

Last week we addressed the importance of taking time to pray with an emphasis on persistence in our prayers. We noted passages, examples and parables that call for us to keep praying. We concluded with some suggestions to help us improve our time in prayer. Today, we want to address prayer and faith.

#### I. What does the Bible say about faith and prayer?

- a. For prayer to be effective AND even accepted by God requires that we have faith.
- b. James 1:5-8 clearly points this out. In matters about growing spiritually (wisdom is the given quality) we can go to God about such. BUT when we do, we must have faith, "with no doubting". The "doubter" will not receive anything from the Lord. (There are many reasons that promote doubts and we will address some of those in our next lesson dealing with hindrances to prayer.)
- c. 1 Timothy 2:8 – pray everywhere, without wrath and doubting...
- d. James 5:13-16 – As we request others (elders) to pray over us, and we pray for one another, it is "the prayer of faith" that will save the sick
- e. 1 John 5:14-15 notes that as we "ask anything according to His will" (prayer), we have confidence (same word as "boldly" in Hebrews 4:16).
- f. Mark 11:24 – to His apostles, (also John 15:7), Jesus told them that whatever they asked for in prayer, IF they believed that they would receive them, they would. Note: We are NOT the apostles, nor will we ever be. There are elements of this exclusive to them. BUT this does illustrate faith and prayer.
- g. Matthew 15:28 – a Syrophenician Greek woman pleads with Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. This is where Jesus tells her that His first work was to the house of Israel. But her response of faith prompted Jesus to hear her daughter that very hour. NOTE: While not a prayer in the sense that we are discussing, it DOES illustrate the idea of God answers the request of faith. There were many examples of Jesus healing that relate to this point.
- h. 1 Peter 5:7 calls for us to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares. This implies faith in our prayers.

#### II. Examples of prayers of faith

- a. Jesus – Luke 23:46 – "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit."
- b. Matthew 17:19-21 – Jesus explains to His disciples why they could NOT cast out a strong demon. Because of their weak faith. He then entered into an address about true faith concluding with the observation that particular demon required "prayer and fasting".
- c. David – Psalm 22:21, "*You have answered Me*", Psalm 3:4, *I cried to the Lord with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill.* Psalm 4:1, *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.* Psalm 77:1 (Asaph) – *I cried out to God with my voice—To God with my voice;*

*And He gave ear to me. Psalm 55:16-17, As for me, I will call upon God, And the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.* In each of these psalms we find faith as they acknowledge that God will answer him.

- d. Paul – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul's thorn in the flesh which he pleaded with the Lord 3 times to remove. The Lord said, "*My grace is sufficient for you.*" And Paul accepted that!

### III. Praying in faith

- a. Understanding the need for faith, what are some things we can do to pray in faith?
- b. First, understand what real faith is and what it is not!
- i. Hebrews 11:1. Faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen. As we have often discussed, our faith is NOT a blind trust. It is based upon "many infallible (convincing – NASB) proofs." (Acts 1:3) Yes, "We walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7), but it is well grounded.
  - ii. Proverbs 3:5-7, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.* This is a good description of what faith is.
  - iii. Hebrews 11:6 without faith you CANNOT please Him.
  - iv. Philippians 4:6-7, let your requests be made known to God. The very concept of approaching God and letting His peace rule in your heart demonstrates the need for AND an understanding of faith in our prayer.
  - v. Ephesians 3:12, *according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.* The bottom line is you have to trust God. That is why we laid the foundation by addressing God as the source of our prayers. Ephesians 3:14-21.
- c. Understand that "Prayer can be risky" – the title of a chapter in the book, "**Devoted to Prayer**" by Marshall McDaniel (Ken McDaniel's son). Dealing with faith, he emphasized that trusting God can be risky.
- i. When we pray to God and leave it in His hands, we are taking a risk – trusting Him to answer our prayer as He knows best. It is not easy to "get into the wheelbarrow" (Niagara Falls story).
  - ii. Think of examples in scripture of those who TRUSTED God and in time He answered them. Abraham when the LORD told him to leave his home country (Genesis 12:1-3) or to offer his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Hezekiah against Assyria – 2 Kings 19.
  - iii. Consider Paul who continually trusted in the Lord. Cf. 2 Timothy 3:10-11 – toward the end of his life he noted various things he had endured, but then he declared, "*Out of them all the Lord delivered me.*"
  - iv. David declared, Psalm 37:23-25, *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.*
  - v. This is what we mean when we talk about trusting God. This is what we mean when we say our prayers must be accompanied by faith. It is so easy for someone to tell you that (especially when you are in crisis), but it much more difficult to do.
- d. Pray about it – Luke 17:5 the apostles requested of Jesus, "increase our faith"; Mark 9:24 records the same occasion where the apostles could not cast out the demon from a boy. But here find a conversation his father and Jesus have (9:20-24). Jesus declared, "*If you can*

*believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” NOTICE his request – I do believe but HELP ME with what is lacking in my belief.*

- e. Read your Bible – listening to God is crucial to building up your faith.
  - i. It is in His word that we understand what, when, how, where, who and why we ought to be praying. It is in His word that we learn what genuine faith is.
  - ii. Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing the word of God.
  - iii. Psalm 119:18, *Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.* NOTE that this is a request of God.
  - iv. Acts 4:24-26 finds Christians praying to God and quoting scripture (Psalm 2:1-2). This shows an understanding of God’s word as they approached Him.
  - v. Hebrews 4:16, because of what Jesus did (which we learn in scripture and through whom we faith) we can come boldly before the throne of His grace. Hebrews 12:2 calls for us to look to Jesus, “the author and **finisher** of our faith.” The LSB, NASB, ESV all describe Him as, “the author (founder – ESV) and **perfector** of our faith”.
  - vi. HOW can we effectively pray if we do not know His word?
- f. Know what praying with faith is NOT:
  - i. Simple optimism – we must realize that not everything will turn out as we want it to
  - ii. NOR is it based upon an entitled attitude or your merit – consider the Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12. Notice that the Pharisee, “prayed thus with himself” (proud and entitled).
- g. Act on it – do your part. You are not praying because you expect God to do everything. A powerful part of faithful prayers is a willingness to submit to Him – cf. James 4:1-3 illustrates this. (NOTE: In our next lesson we will address this further noting some things that make prayer unacceptable). He hears because we keep His commandments – 1 John 3:22, 1 Peter 3:12 (Psalm 24:15) - *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

The truth about prayer in the life of a Christian is that if it is genuine it is BECAUSE of your faith! It is that simple. Increase your faith, and your “prayer life” WILL become more impactful in your life. So, as you pray, do you trust Him? Think about it!