***Intercession

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-027***

Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians." This is segment number five.

**Learning Bible Doctrine**

The Word of God is not "an enigma wrapped in a conundrum," to use the words of Churchill. The Word of God is clear; it is understandable; and, it means what it says.

Recently, a lady who used to attend our church was in between not attending anywhere. And she was asked, "Wouldn't you like to attend Berean Church?" And she said, "Oh, I did. I loved Berean Church. I love all the people there. It's a wonderful place. But I can't understand a thing that Dr. Danish is saying." Now, that cannot be true because even I understand what I'm saying. And that tells me that here's a person who does not have basic framework, and a basic scaffold of doctoral understanding. So, a simple child sits among us. They know what I'm saying. They understand what is being taught.

However, here's a person so devoid of a frame of reference that they cannot understand the Word of God – indeed, the deep things of God, because we don't deal in trivialities here, but the deep things of God. But they're conveyed in understandable language because God the Holy Spirit has prepared the Word of God for our knowledge; for our interpretation; and, for our being able to grasp it. And when the explanation is given, anybody with half a brain tied behind their back can understand the preaching of the Word of God. And this is not a non-church person. This is not a non-religious person. It's a great tragedy for a person to have been reared, and then find themselves incapable of entering into a few of the deep things of the Word of God. The great temptation always is: "Let's go for the trivia. Let's go for the popularity thing. Let's go for the thing that will attract the crowd, but which will, again, as always, rob the people of their true heritage to have the mind of Christ.

**Prayer**

Well, nowhere is that neglect greater than on the subject of prayer. And I'm appreciative to numerous ones of you. Many of you have come and have had appreciative and encouraging words on this subject, because this is an area where Satan raises a lot of conflict and aggravation, because prayer is the one thing that he cannot deal with in the Christian life.

One of the techniques, however, for living the Christian life is prayer. God has provided every believer priest with a means for communicating with Him, and for turning loose the power of God, and meeting one's needs and one's desires. So, a proper prayer based on biblical principles instantly spans the vast distance between us and God's throne in heaven, and we are heard.

Believers in the church age should continually and automatically turn to God in prayer. The problem, however, is to make the right connection to be able to reach God. A great deal of prayer is ritualistic; it is meaningless; it is pointless; and, it never reaches the throne room. We need, therefore, always as believers, who are followers of Jesus Christ, to have the attitude that His disciples had when they said to Him on one occasion, "Lord, teach us to pray."

**Priesthood**

So, the divine technique of prayer should begin with placing the call. During the Old Testament dispensation of the Law, prayers went through the Levitical priesthood. If you wanted to talk to God, you went down to the priest; you brought your sacrifice; you went through the ritual; you expressed your desire; and, he conveyed it to God. And the believer had no indwelling Holy Spirit to process prayers. That's one of the most important principles. And I hope you have a firm hold of that now – that we have learned the ability of praying because the Spirit of God takes what you have said; processes it; readjusts it; makes it right; presents it to God; and, adds what you should have added. So, when we pray, the Spirit of God does his work. In the Old Testament, it was up to the Levitical priesthood.

Now, however, in the New Testament dispensation of the church, we have a direct dialing system to God. And we do not go through any priest but ourselves as the priests of God. So, Hebrews 4:16 gives us this encouragement: "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (God's throne in heaven), that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." For us, the approach to God is all grace, and it is a throne of grace.

Now, when you are born into the family of God by an act of personal salvation (by an act of personal faith in Jesus Christ), you take a very special privileged relationship to God. Galatians 3:26 puts it this way: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." You are a son and a daughter of God. You are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus as the Son of God, and as the One who has paid for your moral guilt upon the cross. As the children of God, you furthermore have been given the privileged position of being the priests of God.

1 Peter 2:5 gives us that illumination, "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." You have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ. That's the first step for installing your direct dialing system to heaven. You, secondly, are a priest that you handle your own dialing and your own conversation (your own approach on the line). You are a holy priesthood, and you have been put in (that position that each of you are your own priests) to being able to offer spiritual sacrifices. We have no more animal sacrifices. And we have studied the spiritual sacrifices that are mentioned in the Bible.

**Spiritual Sacrifices**

One of them is what we do every time we have a Lord's Supper meeting – the sacrifice of your praise. The Scriptures speak of the sacrifice of your lips. And God is pleased when you stand up and speak in His behalf. When you walk out the door of this auditorium, and you pass that offering box, and you place a gift in it, that's the sacrifice of your substance. It is a spiritual sacrifice. And that is the only kind of sacrifices that are genuine in our day. Animal sacrifices are out.

**Roman Catholicism**

The pope is wandering around the country right now, wearing his Dagon hat. Have you noticed that? He never gets tired of wearing that long hat that has the opening at the top. That opening is the mouth of a fish. That was the hat that was worn by Nimrod at the Tower of Babel in the Babylonian religion, because Dagon was the fish god. So the Pope wears had long hat with the open mouth of the fish, signifying that he is a follower of the god Dagon, and Dagon was an expression of the sun. It was a worship of the sun god. And when the Pope sits on his throne in the Vatican, in St. Peter's Basilica, you would notice, if you've been there, that behind him is this large round golden ball that encases him, because it's a symbol of the sun. He is the sun-god. All over the basilica, there are these gold balls signifying the sun because he is the descendant of Nimrod. It's a pagan religion, and people are rushing to him by the thousands.

Well, what Scripture perhaps came to your mind as you watched those scenes? I thought of the Matthew 7 passage: "The gate is small, and the way is narrow to eternal life. And few there be that find it." And all those multiplied thousands and thousands of people that are pushing to get a site of his eminence (his holiness) the Pope, are pressing themselves on the road of destruction, thinking that their religion is taking them to heaven.

The Pope claims to be, as the bishop of Rome, the primary priest. And he has a large contingent of priests. And through them, you may come to heaven, because they will give you the sacrifice of the Mass, which the Pope is performing this very time, even as we speak – the sacrifice of Christ all over again.

Well you have to understand that for prayer to work, that you already have a connection with God. You have to understand that you have been saved through faith in Christ, and that you need no ministrations of a human ecclesiastical organization to make it into heaven. Secondly, you have been made a priest to serve God with spiritual sacrifices – not with the Mass, and not with these physical magical performances.

1 Peter 2:9 further adds: "You Christians are a chosen race – a royal priesthood." We are the royal family of God. So, as individual priests of God, we are a royal priesthood. So, the believer today has direct access to God the Father by reason and by virtue of his new birth through faith in Jesus Christ, and no human priestly mediator is needed to make the connection to God in prayer. You do not have to go to anyone else to be able to reach God.

When you do place your call to heaven, you direct it, as we have already shown you, to God the Father I remind you of Matthew 6:6, "But when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." It's a private matter between you and God the Father. You address it to God the Father.

Now, you can go into your closet, if you want to do this – if you have one of those walk-in closets, that's nice. Or you can go into some isolated place. When I was in college, my first year, I took this very literally, and I would go into the closet and pray. And that's where I would pray – in the closet. And, unfortunately, it was a room that had four other beds in it with four other students, and they shared (they had their closets), and it was kind of a small dormitory room. And one afternoon, I was in my closet praying, and one of the other men in the room came and laid down on the bed. And suddenly, I was through, and I flung the closet door open, and I came out. He flew off the bed and hit the ceiling. That was the first time I saw an automatic prayer catapult (an automatic ejection) right up to the ceiling. He was so surprised, he thought that the Lord had arrived. But you don't have to take it that literally. If you want to be isolated, it helps. The point here is to get away from all the noise and the distractions so that you and God can speak to one another.

John 16:23 also stresses that this approach is to the Father. John 16:23: "And in that day, you will ask me no questions. Truly, truly I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He'll give it to you in My Name."

Now the Christian's phone line to heaven is installed at salvation. And all you have to do is dial the number, and you're in. The number is "J-O-H-N 14:6." It says, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me." If you want to get through to the Father, and you want to get into your direct-dialing system to speak to God in throne of grace in heaven, this is it. You will never get to God in any other way except through Christ. Only through Him can you speak to God the Father. So, John 14:6 is the number.

Now, once the line to heaven has been established at salvation, there's never any time when it is necessary to reinstall the line. You have a permanent hotline to the Father's throne of grace. You'll never receive a busy signal, day or night, and your service will never be cut off for lack of payment. It's a grace system of maintenance and of service all the way down the line.

**Confession of Sins**

The only reason you will not make a connection is when you have stepped out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship, and then you have created trouble on the line, which only you personally can repair through the confession of your known sins. Otherwise, the line is always open.

Furthermore, God our Father invites us to call. There's no reason to hesitate call at any time." This was stressed in the Old Testament by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 33:3: "Call to Me," God says, "and I will answer you. And I will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know." "Call to Me." In the New Testament, the same principle with stressed in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need." So, both the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints are very clearly told that you have an access of speaking to God. And that is the summation of the Christian life.

The great problem all of us face, especially in our time, is the trivializing of our lives and of our days – the allotted time that we have in our lives. And when we do not pray, it's very easy to waste your life. And that you will find will be something that you will weep at. You'll weep over this in heaven – to have wasted your life. And it is prayer that gives orientation to whether all the stuff you're running around doing is what you should be doing for the few days you have left to live. This is a perspective for eternity, and prayer gives you that perspective.

The Old Testament saints, obviously, were taught the principle of prayer, but they had a different approach to God. When they prayed, they approached Him on the basis of His promises. They never approached Him on the basis of the name of the Messiah Savior Who was to come. They always said, "I'm asking you this because You have promised that You will do this. You have promised that You will hear me." And it was the promises of God that was their basis of approach. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, they were even told the very words to use when they went to God.

You have an example of that in Deuteronomy 26:4, and in the verses that follow. This person has brought his offering of the firstfruits at harvest time. And verse 4 says, "Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand (the basket containing the firstfruits that he has gathered), and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God, and you shall answer and say before the Lord your God." And then he gives them the prayer that they should say. The priest says, "Say, 'My father was a wandering Aramean (referring to Jacob), and he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there few in number (70, as a matter of fact). And there he became a great and mighty nation, and the Egyptian treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and interposed hard labor on us,'" and so on. You may read through the rest of that and see that there were the words that he was to say in thanksgiving to God for having brought them through those terrible times in Egypt, and having made a great nation of them, and brought them indeed into that land that flowed with milk and honey. And here he is – bringing the offering of the firstfruits as a result of part of the promise of God. So these words were given to him as an expression of thanksgiving.

We also have this indicated in Hosea 14:2: "Take words with you and turn to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all inequity, and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips.'" And here's where Paul gets that expression: "The fruit of our lips." Praise as one of the spiritual sacrifices of our age, the church age. And you see here that the priest is saying, "Say after me this prayer to God." And he told them the very words. They didn't always do that, but on certain, formal, ritual occasions, they would do that.

Well, that's not the way it is today. Christians are not told what to say in praying. And you should not teach your children to memorize certain prayers. We're not to use a prayer that we use repetitiously, or that we read at certain times of the year that someone has written. That is religion. That is not Christianity. Christianity prays to God. Religion reads to God.

Now it is true that you should be circumspect in your prayer. When you pray (when you come to prayer meeting), you should not make up for the fact that you haven't been praying all week, so that you have a 25-minute-long prayer. You should not preach in your prayer. You should get right to the point of the issues for which you're asking God: the issues of confession; and, the issues of thanksgiving that accompany that, which we'll look at in more detail. But prayer is to the point. You get to the issue. Nevertheless, it's in your words, and you approach God your Father on that basis.

**The Lord's Prayer**

This is not a religious exercise. This is a Christian exercise. For that reason, it is wrong to use what is called the Lord's prayer as an approach to God. It is a meaningless ritual which churches do every Sunday. The Lord's prayer that we have in Matthew 6:9 is actually a model prayer. So, it doesn't say what we need to say today. It shouldn't even be called the Lord's Prayer. It would more appropriately be called "the apostles’ prayer," because it was given to them as an example. There is a Lord's Prayer. It's in John 17. That whole chapter is the Lord's Prayer, and that is a true Lord's prayer. And yet you wouldn't think of getting up in church and memorizing that, and reciting the 17th chapter of John every Sunday. But that is a true prayer of the Lord. But the model prayer is the apostles’ prayer, and it's merely a sample.

Furthermore, it is a sample for the age of Israel. It is not a sample for the church age. It is not a church prayer. It is a Jewish prayer for the time of the millennium. That's why it doesn't approach God in Jesus' name. It's a totally different kind of prayer. They were talking about where they were at that time – bringing in the kingdom.

So, just take it with a smile when, on TV, you see some poor guy in the water surrounded by sharks, and he starts reciting the Lord's prayer. This is meaningless; it is superstition; and, it is ritual magic. What God our Father desires is our own words of a loving child to a loving Father.

Now the basis of prayer is Christ Himself, specifically His name, which represents all that He is. He has access to the Father, and His name refers to all that He is, and all that He has done. It is His authority. So, when we pray in Jesus' name, we pray in His authority. And He taught this very significant change from Old Testament prayer, which was on a basis of the promises of God, to prayer in His name.

One of the places is in John 16:23, "And in that day, you will ask me no questions. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name." And when the disciples heard that, they had to say, "Now that is odd. We're not to go to God on the basis of His promises? We're not to remind God that He promised to do this, and now we're calling upon Him to keep His promise. No, you don't talk about that anymore. You say, "I come to you on the authority of Jesus Christ. And because His authority is my authority to exercise by the virtue of my new birth, I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and as I speak to you, He will process my prayers, and He will give legitimate access to the throne of grace."

Now that is a powerful instrument in the hand of a righteous person – a person who is in temporal fellowship. This guarantees results. Verse 24 says, "Until now, you have asked for nothing in My Name. Ask, and you'll receive, that your joy may be made full." And Jesus recognized that there was a dramatic switch that they would have to make in their thinking: "Up to now, you never asked in My Name. You asked on the promises. Now it's going to be on My authority."

We obviously cannot approach God on our own names. This is what the unsaved do when they try to pray. They're always coming to God on the basis of their own names because they do not have the authority of Christ as born-again people to exercise. To approach the Father in the Son's Name means that we have accepted Christ as the God-Man Savior.

This is admission that we can come to the Father only because Jesus died for our sins. When say, "I ask in Your Name (in Christ's Name), it's because we admit that He has died for our sins, and therefore we can approach God. Our names carry no weight. His Son's does. Since the Father gave up His beloved Son for us in salvation, Romans 8:32 asks that point in question: "Will He deny us anything else?" He did the hardest thing. He certainly is not going to give up the elements of that which is for your blessing now.

**What Should Constitute your Prayers?**

What should constitute your prayers? Several elements should be included in prayer.

1. **Confession**

Number one is confession. Confession is obviously a 1 John 1:9 principle. I guess I better read that. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins", and that's a third-class condition "if," which means maybe we will; and, maybe we won't. But if you do: "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins." He is faithful. He will do it every time. He is righteous. He does it because your sins have been paid for by Christ's death, and therefore He can forgive it: "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanses us from all unrighteousness" – to cleanse from all those sins that we are not aware of, which means those that we have forgotten, and have not confessed.

Now is everyone thinking? You notice that He didn't tell you to ask for forgiveness. Don't ever ask God to forgive you your sins. The Bible does not call up on you to ask for forgiveness of sins. It tells you to confess, and He will forgive. That's the approach in the church Age. You confess, and forgiveness is automatic. And when you confess that you have done this evil, and you have ceased and desisted, then confession is there. It will be there every time. So, prayer, first of all, has to be made on the basis of being under the guidance of the Spirit of God. That's what Jude 20 taught us. You cannot be under the control of the Spirit of God if you have not made confession of known sins. So if confession needs to be made, that's the first thing you do.

Now, I hope you won't come to prayer meeting next week, and sit down, and make this confession public. You will not sit down in your group, and not start talking about things like, "Poor Judd is dead, who was a low-down, no-account, stinking skunk," such that you start describing yourself in terms like that. And then you tell us what has made you a low-down, stinking skunk this week. We don't want to hear it. And some people feel they must purge their souls in doing that.

We had a lady who used to attend church here many, many years ago. She called me up one time and said, "I just want to tell you about some terrible feelings and attitudes I had about you when I was attending the church." And I said, "Oh, you don't have to do that. I'm not interested. God is interested. Why don't you give it to Him?" And she says, "No, no, I have to say it to you. I want to say it to you – what I thought of you, and the attitude I had toward you." And I said, "I already know that. You're not the first. You don't even have to tell me." And she was just beside herself that she had to cleanse her soul by telling me of her mental attitude sins.

**Confession is only to God the Father**

Confession is to God. And when it says here, "If you confess your sins," it means to God the Father. So, get yourself confessed before you come to prayer meeting Wednesday night. And don't try to do it at the beginning of your prayer there. The Christian operates, at any time, either under the control of the sin nature, or under control of the Holy Spirit. If you're under control of the old sin nature, you can't pray. If you are living a lifestyle that is out of sync with the principles of the Word of God for you, and your gender, and your status, and all the other things, you can't pray. It's an empty ritual. But if you are in tune with the Spirit of God, and with the principles of doctrine, then you can pray. And the Word of God enables you to connect with the Spirit of God. So, every prayer needs to face confession first so that the Spirit of God is able to play His role in your prayer.

Unconfessed sin automatically keeps prayer from being carried to heaven. You may go through all the motions of prayer, but with no results, because the line is out of order. You are out of fellowship. Psalm 66 taught this to the Old Testament people. Psalm 66:18: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." And what he's saying there, "If I regard wickedness," means that I see it, and I don't care. Then the Lord isn't going to hear me. The wickedness is there: "Boy, do I ever have resentments?" Do I ever have bitterness? Do I ever have mental attitude sins? Do I ever have all these things that keep me from being in fellowship with God the Father, and I don't care? Then you must understand that you're walking a very lonely path in life, without any divine sustaining, and without any divine guidance. So, confession is necessary first of all in prayer. And it is a private function between you and God.

1. **Thanksgiving**

Secondly, prayer should include thanksgiving. And here we have 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and Ephesians 5:20 as our guiding principle. Let's look at 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything, give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Now that is not always easy to do: "In everything, give thanks."

On one occasion, when my son Steven was our principal at Berean Christian Academy, he was running a chapel program, and he was teaching children this principle of thanking God for that which comes into their lives, and dealing with God on those things. And he read them this verse, I Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything, give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." That means whatever happens. And one little boy raised his hand. That week, that boy's father was a kind of a weekend private pilot, and he went out to the local airport and either rented a plane or was with somebody flying, and the plane crashed, and the father was killed. And this little boy raised his hand and said, "Even if your father gets killed?" Now, that's a tough question to face in the chapel program, because all the other kids are turning and looking and listening. And there was a sad moment to teach the principal: "Yes, in all things, even in that, we give thanks for whatever the ultimate purpose of God is in that. Out of that sadness, God always brings good

It takes time sometimes, perhaps, to find out why that happened to be a good thing, and what God's ultimate long-range plan was. But God is not unmerciful, and in everything that He brings, we may give thanks.

Now, that helps a lot in prayer because there are so many disappointments. People disappoint us; family disappoint us; and, children disappoint us. And yet ultimately, we have to say in all things we give thanks to God for the fact that He is actively participating and functioning in all those activities in all those lives.

Ephesians 5:20 says, "Always give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." So, with confession of the line now open, we begin speaking to God with words of thanksgiving; that is, words of praise. Psalm 107:8 says, "Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness." This principle was clearly enunciated in the Old Testament as well.

Today Christians do not bring animal sacrifices to praise God as they did in the Old Testament. What Christians bring is the sacrifice of praise; that is, the fruit of their lips. This is one of those spiritual sacrifices that we are referring to. This one is in Hebrew 13:15. It says, "Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Now, God is extremely pleased when you express your thanksgiving to Him. And Thanksgiving Day service is coming up. And you should now be thinking ahead what you want to say on that day – What specifically, and to the point you want to stand up and please God with an expression of great thanksgiving. This is the fruit of our lips, and it should be included in prayer.

Jesus began the model prayer of Matthew 6:9 in just this way. He said, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." And "hallowed" means "praise be Thy Name." That's what the word means. So, all good things come from God the Father, so He is worthy of our utmost praise. And when we praise him, and when we thank Him for His answers to prayer, it reinforces and encourages us to the reality of prayer.

James 1:17 says, "Every good thing bestowed, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shifting shadows." And when the prayer system is properly used, these good things come into your life. They will, they will, they will. And on the other side, the bad things will be removed. They will be removed.

One of the things in our prayers in our faculty prayer meeting have been for funding for the academy this year – funding to come to the point where that high level each month that is necessary would come in. And I've said to the teachers and to the staff, "We go month-by-month for God to raise up the funds for us to do the job to which He's called us to do." And this week, along comes one family and says, "We've brought together our financial resources that we have. They're just sitting in a bank. We don't really care about the small interest, and we put this on loan in your hands to use." And they gave us a large amount that will carry us for a while. And that was farthest from my mind as the way of God solving that problem. But that was God's way at this point. I don't know what His point is going to be down the line six months from now, but we go one month at a time. How did that happen? That happened because of the intensity of serious prayer every morning with those teachers and all the individuals – our school board, and the people who know what our need is, who are taking time to ask God this day to make another step towards solution of the problem. And I guarantee you that was no accident. It was the moving of the Spirit of God.

1. **Intercession**

The next thing in prayer is intercession. Intercession is prayer for others – interceding for the needs of other people. We turn freely to God the Father for guidance and for daily needs. Philippians 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." Here the intercession is to be broadened from ourselves, which, of course, is our legitimate starting point. But also, intercession deals mainly with that for other people. That is those prayer requests that are read, and that you raise your hand in prayer meeting to volunteer, to go to the groups when we break up, for you to remember, and you take home, and remember during the week.

Ephesians 6:18 says, "With all prayer and petition, pray all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for" whom? "All the saints." So, intercession is based on Ephesians 6:18 – prayer for all the saints. It is God's will that we should pray for Christians as Ephesians 6:18 indicates, and, in fact, that we should pray as well for unbelievers.

This was pointed out to us in 1 Timothy 2:1-3, "First of all, then, I urge that in treaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men." This is the unsaved world: "For kings and all who are in authority." This is why you pray for government leaders – in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." If you don't like something what the political leaders are doing, you can approach it in two ways. You can get it in such a way stupidly that you become a victim of their power, or you can put them on the block of God's prayer dealings. You can put them up there before God in prayer for Him to deal with them. And the result will be that you will have a tranquil and quiet life. If you deal with it in the wrong way, you will not have a tranquil and quiet life. But if you deal with power authorities on God's basis, interceding for them to correct their bad ways, you will have a quiet and tranquil life. That's the great promise of prayer used appropriately.

So you pray for those you love, and you pray for those who run you down. Matthew 5:44, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." Now, that, brethren, takes grace orientation. There are a lot of those "poor Jud is dead out there" people from Oklahoma – low-down, stinking, skunk types, as the line says in the song. And those are the ones that have abused you; have mistreated you; and, have misrepresented you. And you pray for them? Yes.

I think of a lady now that we have some dealings with that. And I can see all the problems that she has, and boy, does my heart go out to her? And I want to weep over her incapacity to play the role that she should play. And instead of being able to find happiness, she finds nothing but tears. What does she need? She's wrong, but she needs our tender prayers.

This is intercession for others, and it should be part of your prayer life. And not the least of intercession for others, of course, should be the others who are unsaved. 1 Timothy 2:4 reminds us that God "desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." People by themselves don't know the truth in spiritual things. The pope's visit, and the adulation being delivered to him, and the crowds that are pressing to him, show how little truth people know on their own. And when those people would be told the truth, they would reject it with indignation.

And verse 2 reminds us that the kings (the rulers who are an authority in a nation) – they should be prayed for. That's why it's helpful to pray from a prayer list. Too much is at stake for you to depend entirely on your memory. And it is good to check off the answers. It's very helpful to make a prayer list so that you're covering the territory. And when you have the list, it will also encourage you to stop to pray.

Ephesians 5:16 says, "Making the most of your time because the days are evil." And one of the ways to make the most of your time is with prayer. You can make prayer requests in a specific way for specific people.

Finally, there is one thing more that has to be included in prayer. And that is: now you come down to yourself. Petition is prayer in behalf of yourself. This is based on John 15:7 and Romans 8:32. This is talking to God for your own needs. John 15:7: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us also all things." God did the hardest thing of getting us saved. He's not going to keep anything good from you that you ask Him for in prayer. Prayer is requests for yourself at the throne of grace, as Hebrews 4:16 tells us about.

**The Blind Beggar Bartimaeus**

The blind beggar Bartimaeus asked a lot, but he received his site. Mark 10:51-52, Jesus was talking to blind Bartimaeus, the beggar: "And Jesus said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'Rabboni, I want to regain my sight.'" Now that's a hard thing to do. And if Jesus were just a plain old, good old rabbi, like the Jews try to tell us today, He wouldn't have any great powers to be able to heal blind eyes. And the Old Testament said that one of the marks of the Messiah will be that He'll heal blind eyes: "You'll know Him by the fact that He can do that. And when you see somebody going around giving sight to blinded eyes, your mind should say, "Whoa, is this the Messiah?" This is a very clear signal. Jesus said to him, "Go your way. Your faith has made you well. And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him on the road."

What a wonderful result of a petition! What did blind Bartimaeus do? Jesus says, "What do you want Me to do?" And what blind Bartimaeus did was in fact pray to Jesus: "I pray, Lord, that You will give me my sight."

Now the thing that you should remember is that God makes you the same offer today. I'm happy to tell you that you have a blank check. Now you can believe it, or you can blow it off, but you have a blank check. You may ask. John 15:7, "Abide in Me (if you're in temporal fellowship), and if My words abide in you (you know the doctrinal basis of the principles of doctrine), "ask whatever you wish, and it should be done for you," because then you'll be asking in the will of God. And if you're asking in the will of God, God cannot do anything but say, "Yes."

John 14:13-14: "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name (according to the will of God, that is), I will do it."

**Wants vs. Needs**

Now, the Father does not always grant our wants, but He always grants the need that is requested. Philippians 4:19, "And My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The Father does not always grant you what you want, but He will most certainly grant you what you need. And He will do that because of all of His riches. And those riches are available to you through Christ Jesus.

So, when you pray, follow this guideline: confession, to put you in temporal fellowship, so that the Spirit of God can process your prayers for you; and, expression of thanksgiving for what God has done for you, so that you remember, and are reminded of the power of prayer. And what you thank God for is one way of preserving it. Please remember that principle. What you are not grateful for you, will lose. Then pray with intercession in behalf of others: saved and unsaved; the high and the mighty; and, the low and the non-mighty. And then petition – asking for yourself. That's the order. That's the biblical order, and it's one that works.

Now there's a problem here. As marvelous and wonderful as all this is, there are certain serious roadblocks that I'm amazed that I see happening all the time. These are roadblocks to prayer that just neutralize this whole system. And as you listen to those next time, you're going to ask yourself, "How in the world did I stumble stupidly into that roadblock? This is what's keeping me from getting anywhere in pursuing the answer that I seek in prayer.

Father, we ask Thee to guide us, and now apply to our own experience that which we have learned from the Word of God. We thank Thee that we do not make up these things, but that we are simply transmitting to this congregation in simple, understandable language, the Word of God, which is active and powerful for the positive volition. God bless our prayer life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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