***The Defense of Prayer, No. 2

Techniques of the Christian Life

JD15-02***

We continue looking at the defense that Jude gives in his book concerning meeting apostasy. One of the defenses is prayer, and this is the second session on the defense of prayer. We have learned thus far that there is an order in prayer. There is a pattern in prayer. It is to be directed to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Any other kind of prayer is out of line and is not heard or received by God. So it is very important that you learn this arrangement. This is not just a pattern that we recommend or which is optional. This is a doctrinal principle and requirement. Prayer is directed to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The elements that are involved in prayer, we found, are confession of personal known sins; thanksgiving for God's answers to prayer; intercession for others; and, petitions for ourselves.

We also found that there was a relationship, and a varied relationship, between what you may ask in prayer and why you are asking for that particular item. Your petition and your desire are two different things. We found that sometimes the Word of God indicates that God will answer our petitions but we will not experience and enjoy what we thought we would as the result of that answer. Our desires are not met. On the other hand, God may not answer our specific petitions sometimes, but he will answer the desire that motivated that request. A third situation is where the petition is answered and the desire is answered. What you ask is granted, and what you hope to gain by that is also realized.

**Roadblocks to Answered Prayer**

However, there was a fourth condition, and that was that the petition was not answered nor was the desire answered. On both accounts there was a negative. This is caused by certain roadblocks to prayer being answered and to our desires being met. We're going to look at those roadblocks first of all.

1. **The Lack of Faith**

The first roadblock that we find in the Word of God to answered prayer is the lack of faith. We find this in Matthew 21:22: "In all things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Prayer done merely as something that may possibly work is a mere ritual. Hebrews 11:6 says, "For without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe (must trust) that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." So prayer cannot be treated just as something that may possibly be of benefit. Believing prayer means you have confidence in God Himself and you have confidence in the technique of prayer which He has designed. If you treat prayer as merely of questionable value, then you are reflecting on the truthfulness of God. That takes you out of fellowship, and that ends your prayer life.

God wants us to approach prayer as a sure thing--a thing that we can claim. It's a thing which if properly done brings results. Please remember that God will even answer prayer where our faith is on the weak side. This was demonstrated in the church that was gathered in prayer interceding for Peter when he was in prison. When he appeared at the door and the little girl ran inside, and said, "Peter is here. Our prayers been answered," nobody believed her. Consequently, they demonstrated that their faith was quite weak, and yet, Peter was freed from prison.

Jonah thanked God for answer to prayer in advance. We find this in Jonah 2:4 and 9.

1. **Out of the Will of God**

Number two is not asking according to the will of God. In 1 John 5:14 we have this principle stated: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. God never promises that he is going to grant us that which He disapproves. God's will is going to primarily be learned through His Word. Please don't think that you will gain your request from God by making vows. This is a fallacy to say, "I'll make a promise to God and then He will answer my prayer." God does not grant our requests on the basis of vows that we make. The Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity is an example to us in prayer. In Matthew 26:39, He made the declaration that His prayer was on the basis of the Father's will, not on the basis of His will.

Our old sin nature is always so very confident that it knows best, so it tends to guide us astray. So our praying goes only as far as the ceiling. The second principle is that if you want God to answer prayer, it must be in a way which is compatible with His will, and the way that we understand what is compatible with the will of God is to know and understand the Word of God. That is a basic and important principle.

1. **Lack of Compassion**

A third roadblock is lack of compassion. In Proverbs 21:13 we read, "Who so stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he also should cry himself but shall not be heard. In Mark 14:7, the Lord tells us that we will always have the poor with us. Therefore, there is no poverty program that the human mind can devise which will resolve poverty. It will always be here. However God does want us to be concerned and sympathetic for those who are in need. We do ourselves great personal injury when we ignore the fact that some people are poor, and that they have needs which we can aid them with meeting. Psalm 82:3-4 says, "Defend the poor and fatherless. Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy. Rid them out of the hand of the wicked." In other words, even if the people are undeserving, God says have compassion upon those who are in need. A lack of pity upon those in the circle of our acquaintances who have some need causes us to lose out in blessing and in good things. In Psalm 41:1, the psalmist says, "Blessed is he that considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." It may be that God does not listen and answer your prayers because of your mental attitude towards someone who is in need.

1. **Pride and Self-Righteousness**

A fourth roadblock is the presence of pride, and along with it the presence of self-righteousness. Job 35:12: "There they cry, but none gives an answer because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not hear vanity. Neither will the almighty regard it." It seems strange and absolutely unbelievable, in view of what God says concerning pride and the results upon it, that so many Christians fall prey to this thing. There is more pride than you would think among believers. There is more vicious lack of compassion. There is more unkindness that stems and flows from Christians that you would not expect it from just because of their pride--their pride being wounded in one way or another. These are people who at the same time are proud of their self-righteousness. Romans 12:3 warns us against the practice of thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. This was Satan's sin, and it destroyed his communication with God (1 Timothy 3:6). When you pray, by what are you motivated? Is it seeking the Lord's glory, or is it seeking your own glory?

You are acquainted with the story of the publican and the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. There we read that the Pharisee prayed, thanking God for how commendable a person he was, and he went right through. God saw the sin of pride, the sin of self-righteousness, in the Pharisees heart, and we're told, in verse 14, that he did not go home justified. He went home with prayer unanswered and he went home as an unsaved man.

If you have this attitude of being a spiritual snob, despising others, then I can tell you that your prayers are canceled out. We are forever having Christians who are playing this Pharisaic role of looking upon other believers who are worse than they are. It is really pretty hard, sooner or later, not to find some other Christian who has qualities that you consider worse than your qualities. This is building your image of righteousness for yourself on the basis of somebody else's lack of righteousness. If you have this attitude of being a spiritual snob, which is what the Pharisee had, God will not answer or hear your prayers. The publican, on the other hand, asked God to be merciful to him, a sinner. He asked God for this on the basis of the provision that was in the holy place in the temple where the mercy seat was kept. This blood-sprinkled mercy seat was a picture of Christ the Savior to come. This man, verse 14 says, went home justified.

God wants to give us salvation. 2 Peter 3:9 makes that clear. But our pride, our good works, and our personal virtues are viewed as filthy rags by God, and they hinder what God would do for us (Isaiah 64:6). God wants to answer prayers. Our arrogance hinders it. So, maybe God is not answering your prayer because of the problem of your pride, your self-righteousness, and your presumption that you are better than other Christians.

1. **Discord in the Home**

A fifth roadblock to answered prayer is discord in the home. In 1 Peter 3:7, we have this pointed out as a possible hindrance to prayer. "In like manner you husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Parents who fight cannot pray with results because their fighting puts them out of fellowship. Usually they're in such intense feeling of anger and indignation that they ignore confession of sin. Children who fight cannot pray effectively because they too in that condition are not likely to make confession of sin. So anger, malice, unfriendliness--all of these are mental attitudes sins which neutralize your prayer, and they find expression within the family unit.

If you are a grace-oriented Christian, you will resolve a lot of these threats from your old sin nature. A grace-oriented family will not be as likely to be at each other's throats because everybody will have a perspective relative to themselves and to the Lord. Consequently, they will take things in stride; they will not be trying to change the world; they will understand that God is the planner and the executer; and, within the family situation they will resolve things as mature grace-oriented people. Consequently, no matter what their problems are, they will avoid slamming the door of God answering their prayers. Discord and conflict in the home, unresolved, or not taken in a grace way, will destroy your prayer life.

1. **Selfish Asking**

A sixth roadblock is selfish asking. James 4:2-3: "You ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." We will often say we need something, but what we really mean is that we want something to satisfy some lust of our old sin nature. So there are many things around us that will lead us into senseless selfish desires. These desires will hinder our prayer life.

If we pray for the Lord's glory, then He will also honor that prayer and He will give us the desires of our heart. We read in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." You remember that the Israelites were bound and determined that they had to have meat to eat. Finally, God said, "Alright, here's your meat." They thought they would be happy, but they discovered that they were not. Solomon, on the other hand, was asked as a youth, "What do you want? Ask for anything you want. Whatever you want, you will have." Solomon asked unselfishly. He asked for wisdom, and God blessed him with much more. You can read about that in 1 Kings 3:10-14.

1. **Unconfessed Mental Attitude Sins**

A seventh roadblock is mental attitude sins which are unconfessed. Psalm 66:18 warns us about this: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Isaiah 59:2 stresses the same thing: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, and He will not hear. Jeremiah 5:25 says, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you. So here we have mental sins. These mental sins begin in the mind of the soul. Proverbs 23:7 tells us that we are what we think. James 1:14-15 tells us that sin begins with what we think. You and I may put on a good front that will fool people, but God is not fooled. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that God does not look merely upon the outward, but he looks upon the heart. God's ear is deaf to the Christians who are not confessing those mental sins. Even if you confess your outward actions sins, that does not cover those mental attitude sins--hatred, self-pity, an unforgiving spirit, pride, and so on. But confession restores to praying ground. So there is this specific area of mental sins that the Bible says will hinder your prayers.

1. **Not Being Filled with the Holy Spirit**

Then there is an eighth area, and that's not being filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 6:18 says that we are to be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the spirit means to have sins confessed. It is a state of spirituality. Unconfessed sin grieves the Holy Spirit so he will not act for us in prayer (Romans 8:26-27). He cannot act in our behalf. Praying only works if it is in the Spirit. That's what Jude told us. That's where we started--praying in the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who keeps the line open. So if you are not filled with the Spirit, you are really wasting your time in prayer.

1. **Disobedience to the Word of God**

Finally, a very large one is disobedience to the Word of God. 1 John 3:22 warns us about that: "And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Also in John 15:7: "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Notice that it says, "If My words abide in you." So it is important to learn the Word of God. It is important to obey the doctrine of God. You have a splendid example in the Old Testament in King Saul in 1 Samuel 15 and 1 Samuel 28. You remember that Samuel wanted Saul to be a great and faithful king. 1 Samuel 11:6 speaks to us of the occasion that the Spirit of God came upon King Saul, and Samuel had great hopes for Saul. But Saul soon was guilty of disobedience of the Word of God. By steps, it led him to the place where the door to communication with God was slammed shut. There was the occasion when he was facing the Philistines in battle. Samuel had said, "I will come and perform the sacrifice before the battle on behalf of the army which will ensure victory." Samuel didn't come. Seven days had passed, so Saul decided to take things into his own hands, and he performed the sacrifice, intruding into the priestly office (1 Samuel 13:12-14). In the battle with the Amalekites, in 1 Samuel 15:13-26, he did not destroy all the animals, and again Samuel rebuked him. You remember that the reason he said he kept these animals was to sacrifice them for the Lord.

Years later we find that Saul has become very hardened in his negative responses. Finally, the Holy Spirit has left him (1 Samuel 16:14). His right to the kingdom is canceled (1 Samuel 15:28); that is, those who are his heirs will not inherit his throne. Samuel dies and there is no contact with God in 1 Samuel 25:1. Again Saul faces the Philistine army. He tries all the usual methods of communication with God, and everything is closed because of his disobedience of the Word of God. Finally, with Samuel gone, you remember the story of how he desperately calls up the medium of Endor and asks her to bring up Samuel. That's the only time in history that a séance really worked. Samuel had nothing but bad news for Saul. That was that he was going to die in battle with his sons. So Saul's sin remained unconfessed. His prayers remain unanswered. This is how he went to his death.

If you are disobedient to the Word of God, you need not go running around talking to your friends or consulting with Christian leaders in order to get some counseling for getting the things in your life straightened out. The thing to do rather is to take David's way. David tells us the pattern that he followed. In Psalm 32:5, David says, "I acknowledged my sin unto you, and my iniquity have I not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord and You forgave us the iniquity of my sin." Better that we should confess. Better that we should align ourselves back up with what God has said. Acts 13:22 says, "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, 'I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart who shall fulfill all of my will.'" David pleased God because he confessed sin and was obedient to the Word of God.

So here are the roadblocks that you will face. There may be others that you'll find in the Word of God, but these certainly are there. If you find that your petitions and your desires are not met, this may be the answer--one of these nine situations that come upon us.

**Principles of Prayer**

There are certain general things that it would be well for us to understand about the practice of prayer. Just to summarize some of what we have said, there are certain principles that should have evolved now concerning prayer:

1. John 15:7 makes it clear that prayer can only be offered to God by a believer priest. If you are not a Christian, you have no right to approach God in prayer. Only a believer priest can pray.
2. Prayer is to comply with the faith rest principle (Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24, James 1:5-6). When we pray we are to approach God on a believing basis on the fact of the reality of prayer.
3. Prayer has to conform to the will of God to be effective (1 John 5:14). To know the will of God, you must know the Word of God. Effective prayer warriors, you will discover, are people who are good Bible students, people who know the Word of God.
4. Prayer has to be offered in the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). A Christian who is not in the inner circle of temporal fellowship will not be a person to whom God will respond.
5. Prayer is to be made with thanksgiving. Ingrates have a way of getting spiritually confused (Philippians 4:6). Prayer is to be made in conjunction with the appreciation for what God has done.
6. Prayer offered in the status of carnality cannot be heard (Psalm 66:18, James 4:2-3). This is the opposite of what we've just said about being filled with the Spirit. It has to flow from that inner circle of fellowship. Any prayer that God answers when we are out of fellowship, which He in His sovereignty may do, is simply a response of His grace.
7. Prayer is made on the basis of grace. The believer never deserves anything (Hebrews 4:16).

The prayer order we have indicated is addressed to God the Father, in the name of God the Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit: addressed to God the Father (Ephesians 5:20, Matthew 6:9, 1 Peter 1:17); in the name of the Son (John 14:13, John 15:16); and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). For this reason we say that prayers which violate this order are not heard. If you pray to Jesus Christ, God the Father will not hear you. If you pray to the Holy Spirit, God the Father will not hear you. Both of these persons of the Godhead direct their prayers to the Father (Romans 8:26-27, John 17).

**Confession of Sin**

Now, you do have a specialized kind of prayer that is very important for you as Christians to make. This is the prayer of confession of sin. In the execution of 1 John 1:9, we actually are expressing a prayer. Here's the order for the confession prayer:

1. You address the prayer to God the Father. If you are going to have sins forgiven and temporal fellowship restored, the prayer is to be confessed to the Father. That is very important.
2. You turn the searchlight of the Word of God upon the issue that's breaking your fellowship. You know what the sin is. You turn to the Word of God to see what the Word of God has to say concerning that sin. Then you put that sin under the light of the Word.
3. You make the act of confession. Confession means that you name the sin.
4. You thank God for the fact that He has forgiven you that sin. This is a rather important practice. When you have prayed to the Father, called attention to the doctrine that's involved, and have made confession of the sin, it is important that you now thank God for the fact that He has forgiven you that sin.
5. Pray in the name of Jesus Christ.
6. Forget the sin as God has forgotten it, and move on. That's why we say that it is well for you to thank God that the sin is forgiven and that you can move on. Many Christians will make confession of sin. However, they then do not thank God for what He has done for them, so they have a guilt complex and they fall back out of fellowship because they're remembering what God has forgotten. That's an insult to God because it suggests that God cannot take care of some sin.

**Negative Attitudes toward Prayer**

There are certain negative attitudes which you may have toward prayer. These negative attitudes may be some of the problem if you find that prayer is a drag in your life.

1. For one thing, you may say, "Wow, prayer is a spiritual gift. Since I don't have the gift, I can't pray, and I don't try to pray." You hear people say, "Oh, I don't go to prayer groups because I just don't have that gift." Well, I want to tell you that prayer is not a spiritual gift. It is something that every believer priest can do. Only believer priests can pray, but every believer a priest can pray. So, you may set to rest the fact that you have to have a gift of prayer to be able to pray.
2. Another negative attitude is that prayer is personal. Therefore, it should not be done in groups with other Christians. However, in the New Testament we find that Christians did gather in groups for prayer. While there are some personal matters that you should not mention in group prayers, you may always cover them as unspoken requests. It is legitimate that your personal matters be there in the group as unspoken requests. It would certainly be out of line for you to ask a group to pray about something that is of a very personal nature.
3. Another negative attitude is that prayer is optional. I don't have to pray. I'm a Christian. I have liberty. If I feel like praying, if I want to pray, I can. If I don't, I won't. However, the Word of God does not leave prayer as an optional practice. It is the key for God to produce divine good through us. I realize that God knows our needs before we ask Him. However, he has established prayer as the method by which He's going to fulfill those needs. Therefore, we are commanded to pray, and we are told that if we do not, we will be lacking God's blessing.
4. Another negative attitude is, "I don't have time to pray." If this is your situation, it is a sign that you are a slave to the details of life. It's a sign that you are under enslavement of these elements of life that are chewing up your time. A lot of prayer time is lost, as a matter of fact, by what you waste your time on. If you'd stop to consider some of the things in which you waste your time, you would discover that you have a lot more prayer time.
5. Another negative attitude is that I don't know how to say it or what to say. This is a big concern to people particularly in prayer meeting. People frequently will not come to prayer meeting for the simple fact that they are afraid that they don't know what to say or how to say it. However, that's really a very self-centered attitude. No matter how you say it, I can assure you that the world will not stand still. The world will not stop no matter how you say your prayer. You are to start with what is obvious to you as something that you should pray about.

I have been in prayer meetings where it was evident to me that somebody wanted to pray and they were just concerned that they didn't know how to say it or what to say. All of a sudden they would enter a prayer group and now they would pray. I've heard people pray a prayer which I knew they had gone to a book, a book of prayers, and they had memorized it, and they had fixed it up. All of a sudden here's this person who can hardly say, "Huh?" when you say something to them, and yet they explode in prayer: "Almighty God, maker of heaven, thou who dwells out there in the universe among the stars and the angelic hosts, we do now beseech Thee in the name of thy Son to enter this place, this sanctuary where we now appeal to Thee from the depths of our hearts for those things which we do most earnestly need and which we do earnestly beseech Thee for." And I'm peeking at this person to see whether he's reading his prayer. I had a lady do this one time, and I wondered whether she was reading this, but she wasn't. She just did a good job of memorizing. But do you know what happened next week? No praying. It's hard to memorize those prayers every week like that and sound big time. That's ridiculous. I can't pray because I don't know how to say it or what to say. Yes you do. You just say it the way that is your way of saying it, and you say the things that are obviously important at the moment, and God will lead you to the things that are more important that you should be praying for.

1. Another cop-out is, "I can't stand listening to some people pray." You'd say, "Well, no. No Christian is going to say this." Oh, yes they will. I have heard some of these self-righteous women around here say, "I just can't stand listening to that man pray. When that man gets up and speaks, it just makes me burn all over. The problem is with you, not with that individual. If a person is praying where he's doctrinally incorrect, you make it correct. If you know better doctrine, you pray along with him and you correct the doctrine. If he's off, you silently ask God in the right way. But if you center your mind on the Lord and not on the people in your prayer group, you won't have any problem with anybody praying no matter how people pray. I know people get off in prayers. It's very tempting for some people to get off and start preaching in their prayers. Pretty soon they're explaining things to God that you wondered why God never knew this. Everyone is relieved, in a way, that they're explaining these doctrines to God in case He's not up on them. Nevertheless, you can have a very relaxed attitude even in a situation like that. Don't try to excuse yourself from praying because you can't stand the way some people pray.
2. Another favorite negative attitude is, "I never see the results of my prayers." So what if you don't? What's the difference? God hears, and a sovereign God deals with the legitimate requests according to His wisdom. It may not be the kind of answer that you think you would like to see, or that you think God should give you. But I guarantee you that if you are on praying ground, and you are offering legitimate requests, God will hear, and God will answer. It might be in ways that you at the moment are not even able to spot the answer. You have no excuse by saying, "I never see the results of my prayer."
3. You may also say, "My mind wanders when I pray." A lot of people's minds wander when the Word of God is taught. A lot of people's mouths wag when the Word of God is taught. They have mouths and minds that are wandering, but that's a matter of discipline and a matter of learning. Anytime you see somebody or hear somebody who's discourteous in a service by talking or distracting, he's an undisciplined slob who hasn't developed enough Christian personal spiritual maturity to be able to control his mouth within a service. He thinks he has something more important than what God has to deliver. Your mind will pull the same stunt on you until you develop, through learning the Word, some personal discipline. When you get enough right doctrine, you will know how to pray in the right way, and you will also be able to control your wandering mind.

So these are some negative responses, none of which are legitimate, but very frequently Christians come up with these as justification why they never show up for prayer meeting. I could multiply these. Obviously, there are many more excuses that people come up with: "I'm tired." "I'm busy." "It's a long day," and one thing or another. So I know that there are misconceptions and hesitancies that our old sin nature throws up to us, which are no problem with God--only with us.

**False Ideas about Prayer**

We have a lot of false ideas about prayer.

1. One of them is these traditional phrases. Some people think that traditional phrases will make your prayer acceptable to God. I was in a summer camp one time where the boys at a counselor ring were asked to sing the song, "Thank You Lord for saving my soul." The pious camp director, who was quite a legalist, said, "Now boys were going to sing, 'Thank Thee Lord for saving my soul.'" So there we were all singing, "Thank Thee Lord for saving my soul," because he thought that was appropriate English. Shakespearean English was in with God. Modern English was out. This is the principle that we have declared in Mark 7:13: "Making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have delivered, and many such things you do." Now it may be a tradition that certain words are used in prayer. We may have certain phrases and certain terminology, but this is not to say that that's the only thing that's acceptable with God. There is no such thing as holy language in prayer. There is no such thing as phrasing that is required by God. Modern English is just as good as old English. There is no objection to addressing God in the way that you are used to speaking. On the other hand, there is no objection to addressing God in dignity and with respect, and we ought to address Him in that way. But don't think that there is specialized language by which you must approach God. This will dissuade you from praying.
2. Secondly, don't think that if you are intense in your praying that you will gain more results. Sometimes you're in a prayer group and you will be with somebody who will be repeating certain Bible expressions. "Amen." "Lord." "Hallelujah." "Praise the Lord." "The Lord willing." They think that this makes them more acceptable to God. Every request, every sentence, or every phrase is closed with "the Lord," "hallelujah," and so on. Or, you will have somebody who will think that his style of praying, his intensity, will be demonstrated by speaking slowly: "Our Father, who ... art in heaven ... hallowed be thy name," and he just carries on. You're sitting there waiting for his next word. Pretty soon, you notice the guy next to you dozing, and you give him an elbow, because the prayer is putting the troops to sleep. He's sharing his depth of intensity by slow praying. It can also go the opposite way. You have the guy who prays so fast that you think he wants to break the sonic boom. He's whipping it right through. You have both kinds of praying, slow and fast. This is that idea that I'm going to get in there and be all fired up and be intense because I'm going to get through to God. Your slowness of speaking, your speed of speaking, will not make it.
3. Another favorite misconception is your external position of prayer. It's thought that if you kneel, your praying will be far more acceptable to God than if you stand or sit. I knew a kid as a teenager who used to like to look at people's knees, particularly fellows, to see whether the hair was worn off their knees, and he thought he could tell their spirit's quality. If they were kneeling in prayer, it would wear off the hair on their knees. I don't know how many of you are knee checkers, but that's the kind of inanity that you get into--on your knees, that's a spiritual Christian. He's really in there for the Lord.
4. Some think that prayer is better if it's done in some supposedly holy place like church or a shrine or some goofy prayer tower that somebody builds. Some people have someplace like that where they go to pray. Do you have troubles? Do you have a crisis in your life? You hustle down to the church and you sit there in the cathedral and you pray because you're going to get through to God. Or, you go home and you pray in your closet. You shut the door; it gets locked; you can't get out; you lose your temper; and, you're out of fellowship. Or you pray on your face. A professional preacher loves this. He loves to get up and say, "I went into my study and I fell on my face in prayer before the Lord." And he tells what God showed him. Or, you can hold your hands up in the air. There are a lot of Christians today who like to pray like that. They feel that they're really getting through to God if they pray with those holy hands lifted up. Your physical posture does not make any difference in getting through to God. The only reason people pursue things like this is for the brag value when they speak about this later. They have a great opportunity to brag about how they fell on their faces. Or they closed themselves up in their closet and they interceded with God.
5. Another fallacy about prayer is the traditional schedule. Some think that your prayer will be more effective if you get up early in the morning to pray. If you just get up early in the morning, before your usual hour, before daybreak, get up there and stagger into the front room, on your knees with your eyelids half-open, and start praying to God. You're sitting there half-groggy trying to get awake. But it's early in the morning. Or, if you're out on a vacation, get out on the mountain top, and pray there as the dawn comes up. Or you pray all night. There is this idea. Every now and then you hear about some kooks who have an all-night prayer meeting. They're usually some apostate group praying around the clock. They build themselves a prayer tower and then they pray around the clock. Here are these apostate characters carrying on a little bit of religious ritual, and thousands of uninformed Christians are carried away with it and impressed.

We once had a man here at the church that said a very good thing. He said, "I don't pray when I'm tired." He was explaining why he didn't pray before he hopped into bed. This is another scheduled time, something very sacred. Some of us have been reared as children that that was the time to pray, just before we go to bed: when we're dog-tired; when we can hardly think; and, when we can't keep two sentences straight. That's the time to pray. We eventually get ourselves so wide awake trying to pray that we can't fall asleep for half the night, so we're dead tired all the next day and aren't worth anything to the Lord. The scheduling of prayers is a farce. Again, these are done frequently because it gives you good bragging material in the testimony service later.

**Misconceptions about Prayer**

There are also certain misconceptions. One of these is a misconception that the Lord's Prayer is also a holy magic talisman that you may use. Some people think that the Lord's Prayer is something you should repeat daily. Or if you're in some kind of crisis, that's the time to use the Lord's Prayer. Here you are in one of the great mountain passes out west. You're going down a steep grade, and you don't have any breaks in your car. So there you are holding the steering wheel, whipping right around those mountain roads, and so you start saying the Lord's Prayer to keep yourself from going over the cliff. You ought to be praying a little more specifically, "Lord, would you stop the car, please?" This would be more to the point, and it would be a prayer that would be more significant for you to have answered. There is no merit in standing up in church, as many do, every Sunday morning and repeating the Lord's Prayer.

It is also a misconception to think that you place public prayer above private prayer, or vice versa. Every now and then you hear somebody say. "Well, I don't pray in public because I think private prayer is what's important." Or, somebody says, "Well I don't pray privately. I center my attention on the importance of public prayer." One is not more important than the other.

These are a series of factors that are involved in prayer. These are the basics. I hope that your heart has been excited by the potential power that you have to be a prayer warrior. There are no personalities in the Christian life. There is nobody who is a better prayer person than anybody else. It all depends on your following the ground rules. It all depends on your knowledge of the Word and your subjection and response to God's technique of prayer. You can be just as effective as anybody that you can ever read stories about who accomplish great things through prayer. Prayer is a working system. It is not something that God stumbled into, something that He invented and hoped that somehow it would work. It is a working system. If you get over what people have put upon it which discourages you from praying, I think you will find that there will be a whole new facet of your spiritual experience that will come wonderfully alive as you realize you can talk to God and you can move heaven. Yes, you can.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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