***The Technique of Prayer
RO161-01***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

Our subject is "Christian Conduct," and this is segment number nine.

**The Sin Nature**

Anybody who is not born again spiritually is a slave to the desires of his sin nature. That's true of unbelievers, and it's equally true of Christians. A Christian can do all the vile things that an unbeliever can. The only difference is that when the Christian's old sin nature makes an appeal, we have the capacity, through the indwelling Holy Spirit and our knowledge of the Word of God, to resist the appeals of the sin nature. The poor unbelievers does not have any capacity to resist evil. The unsaved is at the mercy of Satan, who directs the unbeliever's thinking, and who manipulates that poor individual's will.

**Satan**

So, Satan moves the old sin nature to perform the most brutal and heartless evils imaginable. All you have to do is read your newspapers; listen to television news; and, talk to people who are in law enforcement, and you will get an idea of how absolutely gross, vile, degrading, and brutal a human being can be. And Satan is out there destroying lives in a way that is so pitiful that you wonder that human beings would respond to him, but they do. As a matter of fact, it is now commonplace for Americans to compromise their personal integrity for material gain, and to satisfy the lusts of the old sin nature.

It is a constant disappointment to see somebody in a position of trust, in some area of life, prove to be a compromiser of the integrity of God. As a result, Satan is turning human beings into barnyard animals, which bear very little resemblance to the image of God in which they were created.

**America is Becoming Anti-God, Anti-Bible, and Anti-Christian**

American society at all levels is rapidly becoming anti-God, anti-Bible, and anti-Christian. And it is more important than ever for you and me, as Christians, to understand the principles of Bible doctrine, so that we can move through our society, and at least sound an alarm. Mostly we're going to be ignored. Mostly we will be treated with contempt. Mostly we will be pushed aside as the herd of anti-God, anti-Bible, and anti-Christian storms on its way to its own destructive end.

It was a shock for thinking Americans to hear this week one of the leading politicians of Japan to say that: "We, in Japan, are now the number one economic nation in the world, and we must assume that responsibility." Who won the war? And the sorry about that is that Japan *is* number one. You say, "How could that happen?" A few years ago, the United States was one of the few creditor nations left. We were one of the few nations around the world where people owed us more money than we owed them. Now we are one of the world's leading debtor nations. Who did that? The person sitting next to you? Who made us a debtor nation? He made us violate all those principles of our Christian heritage, and of our biblical knowledge, which the Japanese, without having a Christian heritage, yet understand these principles of frugality, and responsibility, and personal enterprise, and preserving the freedom of the individual citizen, and government butting out of the lives of people.

All of this is tightly knit together with a society that is thumbing its nose at God, because it doesn't believe that the Bible really has anything to say that is really true, and that God is sitting up there tapping his foot, ready to lower the boom, and to destroy this nation. This nation is being destroyed, and it is being destroyed by the old sin nature running rampant in American society, because without regeneration, there is no control upon the evil of man. And when a society devotes itself to the things that God opposes, there is no hope.

So, unbelievers are truly people who are without hope, both now and in eternity. They walk through life, victimizing others, and being victimized themselves. They seek spiritual reality in Eastern mysticism, and that's why the New Age movement, which is the current expression of Eastern mysticism, is becoming very popular. What the New Age movement does is the same thing that all the occult movements of the past have done. We used to call it witchcraft. We don't call it witchcraft anymore. We call it New Age thinking. And what it does is enables a person to come in touch with the spirit world, and be demonized as much as witchcraft used to.

However, now Eastern mysticism has given us the idea that we are all gods, if we would only realize it; and, that we have all the answers in ourselves, if we would just look within ourselves. That concept is now carried on to the highest corporations in the United States. We're beginning to hear of some reaction, because public corporations (and I mean the big guys) have been bringing in professionals from the New Age movement concept, to speak to their highest executives, in order to train them in turning loose their human potential, and to expand their consciousness. And some of these men are saying, "Wait a minute. You're not just expanding my consciousness. You're tying me under the control of something that I sense that I don't like."

These men are right. What these clinics are doing are helping people to be associated with demon powers, and demon powers are great when you're riding high on them, but they are terrible in their ultimate consequences. The average American, in times past, would have spotted witchcraft immediately. Now you give it a new name, and he thinks he's got some great human potential to release. But when these people are finally torn apart by Satan in the most brutal way, they sit there whimpering in their pain, and in their shame. And when they die, they go into the lake of fire, and suffer forever the true wages of sin, which is death.

So, in a picture like that, along comes a group of people who are not only Christians, but in a society of darkness like that, come some bright, shining beacon light of people who've been taught the doctrines of Scripture; who are positive toward those doctrines; and, who actually live by them. We suddenly find Bible doctrine-oriented Christians who stand in stark contrast to the unsaved slaves of the sin nature. These are Christians who can truly say no to the sin nature. This is true because the Christian has a new Masters; that is, Jesus Christ. The believer finds great joy in obeying God, not in disobeying Him. He finds great joy living by God's moral rules, not by breaking those rules. The Christian can indeed resist the sin nature. He can obey the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Christian has the capacity to say "no" to the enticements of the sin nature.

**The Christian's Hope**

So, here in Romans 12:12, the apostle Paul has been explaining to us how these beacon lights in a dark society should live, so that their light is not dimmed. This is the integrity that is true Christianity. This is the integrity that is befitting an individual Christian. In Romans 12:12, Paul has said, "Rejoice in hope." The Christians are to be able to rejoice in the fact that they have a real hope in life. They have hope for eternal life in heaven. That's not just an imagination. It's real. They have hope for power over the sin nature. That's not just possible – it is a reality. They have hope for rewards for the service in which they invest their lives as Christians.

The Christian's hope includes world peace, which is on everybody's minds today. This piece is not based on some blind optimism as it is with the unbelievers. It is not based upon arms treaties which are formed by ignorant intellectuals who think they can find peace on earth with communist powers without the presence of the Prince of Peace. Jesus Christ. So, we are called to place our trust in the promises and integrity of the evil Russian empire, which has never kept any treaty it has ever signed in the past. The ultimate result of the earth's hope for peace is going to be shattered. And we know from the Bible, in Ezekiel 38 and 39, that that's going to be shattered by the very government that we are now making peace treaties with. For it was the prophet Ezekiel, who, centuries ago, told us that this power from the North would come down upon the nation of Israel, and would attack that little country, and God would come into the picture, and destroy the Russian evil empire.

I do want to pause to answer a question that was raised on Ezekiel 39:2, which I should have mentioned in the last session. Ezekiel 39:2 makes an interesting point when God, speaking to this power to the north of Israel, Russia, says, "I will turn you back," meaning, I'm going to take you, and I'm going to direct you in the direction I want to go. And I'll leave but the sixth part of you." Some Hebrew scholars believe that's a true translation, and that that is telling us that God is going to destroy everything but one-sixth of the Russian armies, and her allies, and of the Russian homeland.

However, there is also strong reason, because of the Hebrew text here, which is a little unclear, that this phrase is more accurately to be translated as, "I will drive you on," or, "I'll drag you along." So, God says, "I'm going to turn you around toward Israel, and I'm going to drag you down from the North parts upon this nation, and I'm going to cause you to come against the mountains of Israel." It's very interesting. This power in the north, which can only be Russia (as you look at a map), hates God, and doesn't care about God, and thinks that it's in control. God says, "I'm going to take you, and I'm going to turn you around, and I'm going to literally drag you down."

So, the newer translations, you probably notice, if you have one, actually prefer the concept of God whipping them down to attack Israel. God says, "He will drag the Russians – drag them along to their own doom." Even if that is a better translation, the results are the same. The result will still be the destruction of the Russian people, and of their allies, and some will be left, but most will be destroyed. So, if we don't know the specific amount, we do know that the results will be the same. To the communist, peace always means the absence of any resistance to the imposition of socialism and communism on any nation. And God is going to destroy that kind of peace.

**Patient in Tribulation**

So, to the believer who has genuine hope in God, there is a genuine hope for peace on earth. Well, in Romans 12:12, Paul has a trilogy of admonishments to Christians. First: "Be happy in the hope that you have as Christians." The second part of this trio is, "Patient in tribulation." The word "patient" looks like this in the Greek bible. It's "hupomeno." This Greek word means "to persevere in a situation." Actually, it's made up of two Greek words. The first one means "under," and the second one means "to remain." So, this word means, "Stay under a tough situation." Don't try to squeak out from a tough situation in life. Specifically, this connotes fleeing from something which is unpleasant. It is in the present tense that tells us that it is the Christian's constant duty not to seek to escape this unpleasantness. It is active voice, which means he is to choose to stay with it. It's a spiritual principle being enunciated.

Escape from what? You are not to try to get out from under tribulation. This is the Greek word "thlipsis." The Greek word "thlipsis" connotes a pressure or a distress on a person. Specifically, here it is talking about the pressures that come from Satan and his demons on the Christian who is serving God, because that's what he has been talking about here. The Christian who is living the Christian life with moral integrity, and the Christian who is serving God, that is the Christian that Satan says, "No, I have to do something about you."

If the devil never troubles you, you're no trouble to the devil. But if you are a problem to the devil, then he's going to bring burdens into your life. He's going to try to discourage you. He's going to try to slow you down. He's going to try to sidetrack you from your devotion to him. He's going to dangle all kinds of things out in front of your nose, such that you're going to say, "Boy, isn't that great? Wouldn't I like to have that? That's the ambition I want. That's the power I want. That's the money I want. That's the prestige I want. That's the fame I want. That's the recognition I'm looking for. That's the position I'd like to attain." And pretty soon, your eyes are focused on that, and off the Lord. But you can say, "No, that's OK, but that's secondary. First of all, is the will of God in my life." Then Satan places pressures upon you.

What this little passage is saying is, "Don't be discouraged when the pressures come in the angelic conflict of your life. Stay in the battle. Keep up the spiritual battle." And that means keep up the spiritual battle. Don't just hunker down like a bull out on a field in a snowstorm that turns his back to the direction from which the wind is blowing, and he hunkers down to survive. This word means that you turn the enemy, and you start charging, and you start demonstrating that you are in the fight. It's a very significant word. Don't knuckle under.

**Christian Suffering**

Well, suffering in the Christian life is no secret to most of you, because God never promised freedom from suffering to the Christian here on earth. In fact, the Holy Spirit took the trouble many times to remind us that there's going to be emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual troubles that are going to come your way. In John 16:33, the Lord Jesus says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world, you shall have tribulation ('thlipsis'). But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. The worst that can come to you," the Lord says, "I've already made provisions for a way out for you. You stay in there."

In Acts 14:22, the same principle is found – confirming the souls of disciples, and exhorting them. Paul says to: "Continue in the faith." This phrase has been updated to: "Keep the faith, baby." And that's a biblical concept. It depends upon which faith it is that you're keeping, as to whether it's of any value. He is exhorting them to keep the faith, and that we must, through tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. We Christians will face opposition that hurts. We will be tempted to step aside and relieve the pressure.

1 Thessalonians 3:4 also says, "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and you know." The apostle Paul, like the Lord Jesus, always tried to prepare believers for the day of tribulation. So, from the day of Pentecost onward, Christians have indeed passed through fiery trials. Many of them have been martyred for Christ. What is the proper code of conduct for the Christian soldier? You always have to have a very clear, understandable code of conduct for a Christian (for a soldier) in the midst of battle. That is very important. Otherwise, there's confusion in his mind on how he should respond. He is told specifically what he should do in the presence of the enemy – what he should say, and what he should not say. For the Christian soldier, the proper code of conduct is to endure in stride the trials of battle – not just to endure the battle, but to keep fighting.

So, when Paul says to, "Be patient in tribulation," this is the call to persevere in God's service under suffering. It is still pertinent to Christians today, and in some nations, more so than others. The world of Satan hates the Lord Jesus Christ. It hates the church, and it hates, therefore, the people who make up the body of Christ. In John 15:18, the Lord said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."

Of course, the apostle Paul is a good person to listen to. He can speak with a lot of experience, on this business of suffering, in a way that most of us can't. Most of us have had little real experience with genuine suffering. But it is this man, who really was suffering by personal experience, that would say in 2 Corinthians 1:4: "Who comforts us (speaking of God) in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God." Paul says, "We have learned what it is to be comforted by God. We know how to comfort other people."

2 Corinthians 1:8 says, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we repressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." Now that is trouble. When you are not sure you are even going to physically survive, now you're beginning to have trouble. And the apostle Paul said, "We were so pressed by the enemy, Satan and his demons, in Asia, as they opposed our work, that we were despaired even of being able to survive in our very lives."

**Temporal Rewards vs. Eternal Rewards**

In 2 Corinthians 4:16, Paul says, "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day-by-day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal rate of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The apostle Paul says, "I understand the principle of being worn down on the outside. I understand the principle of finding my physical strength diminishing. I find that the privations and the pressures I am under affect my health. I find that it turns my hair gray. I find that it slows down my step." But he says, "As I watch that outward man deteriorating, I realize that the inward man is growing stronger day-by-day by that very attack. And furthermore, that which I do not now see is the enormous amount of personal reward in heaven that awaits me. So, while the treasure of my physical capacity goes down, the treasure in heaven goes up." It's a good principle to remember. We all need to operate on that.

One more is in 1 Thessalonians 3:4-8: "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and you know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your fate, lest by some means, the tempter has tempted you, and our labor be in vain." Paul sends back to these people in the city of Thessalonians, and says, "I became so concerned whether you were really good soldiers of Jesus Christ, continuing in the Lord, or whether the tribulation had knocked you out." So, he said, "I sent Timothy as an envoy to get a report. But now, when Timothy came from you to us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, and we also to see you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. For now, we live if you stand fast in the Lord." And Paul says that it was a great encouragement to him when he found that the believers in Thessalonica stood up under the pressure of the work.

These people could have said, "Ah, Paul, all that stuff you taught us ever since I started listening to you and doing the things that you've been saying that God wants us to do, I've had nothing but trouble. When I was not paying attention to you, and when I was not keeping the rules of morality, I was having a great time." Of course, you were, because then you were serving Satan, and you were storing up the wrath of God against yourself that was coming. Now you're storing up the blessing of God, which also is coming. So, you have your choice.

So, what we are saying is that godly Christians can expect sufferings of various kinds in Satan's world. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Every Christian suffering differs as per his temperament, but all kinds are to be taken in stride. We simply do not give up.

We remember the admonition of Hebrews 13:5, which says, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness. Be content with such things as you have. For He said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you." That is logistical grace. God says, "Whatever you need to survive, while you're serving Me, I'll see that you get it. I do not send my soldiers out into battle, and then not supply them in the field.

1 Timothy 6:12 says this: "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold onto eternal life under which you are also called, and has professed a good profession before many witnesses."

2 Timothy 4:7 adds to that. The apostle Paul was looking back on his own life. He said, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." And for all of us, that is a great thing to be able to say, when we come indeed to the end of life. But you have to start thinking about that now.

**Continue Diligently**

The final statement of this trilogy in Romans 12:12 is: "Continuing diligently in prayer." The word "continuing" is the Greek word "proskarteo." "Proskarteo" means "to persist in something." This connotes being devoted to something. This is used in Acts 10:7, where it is used of a devout soldier. He continues in his calling. This same word is used in Acts 6:4, where the apostle says that they would give themselves continually to prayer and to teaching, if the deacons would handle the money and the material things, and distributing to the physical necessity of the welfare program that they had. So, this word means "to persist in something." It is the characteristic of doing something faithfully. This is to be done continually. This is to be done by personal choice. This is to be a principle of life.

**In Prayer**

What is it we are to do with such persistency? Prayer ("proseuche"). Be careful that you don't yawn too quickly and say, "Yep, I'm for prayer." This word "prayer" is the general word of petition to God. It is asking for things. Please never forget that prayer is asking for things. If you are not asking God, you are not praying. Now you may want to thank Him, and you should. You have confession of sin, and you should. And whatever praises you may express, you should. But that isn't praying. Prayer is saying, "God, would You do this for me? Would you give me this? How about this? Is this a good idea?" That is prayer. Most Christians don't have the foggiest notion of what prayer is all about. Prayer is backing up your five-ton truck, and asking God to start loading it up.

Prayer is essential, as a matter of fact, for living a godly life, and being fruitful in God's service. Prayer is God's way of getting things done. Yes, He knows what you need. Yes, He knows how to do it. But He's not going to give you what you need. He's not going to do for you what you need to have done for you until you ask Him. Prayer is the way a sovereign God has decided to function. Aha, now that makes prayer a lot more significant. And those of you who haven't been doing much prayer this week probably can figure out why some things haven't gone too well for you, or why some things haven't been worked out, and haven't been resolved.

God is not sitting around there, running around like grandmothers and grandfathers who are always trying to figure out what they can do for their grandchildren, whether the grandchildren want it done or not, and whether they ask or not. God says, "I'll do it if you ask. If it's OK, I'll give it to you. If it's the right thing in My plan, you may count on it.

So, this is a significant word: "proseuche" – the word of asking for something. And please remember that prayer is talking to God, in asking Him. This is not talking in formal poetry to impress people. When a preacher gets up and talks in flowery, formal poetry, you know that he's talking to people. He's praying to people, and not to God.

**The Technique of Prayer**

However, there are certain things that you should know about the way God handles the technique of prayer.

1. **Pray Without Ceasing**

First of all, the Bible says that a Christian is to be consistent and regular in prayer. That should be self-evident. But the Bible takes the trouble to stress that to us. Colossians 4:2, for example, says, "Continue in prayer." That's a very simple statement. Just keep doing it.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 is a very crisp and a very famous statement: "Pray without ceasing." Obviously, we bring that into the reality of life. That doesn't mean that you don't do anything else but pray all day long. What it means is that you constantly resort to prayer all day long in every situation of life as it becomes necessary. You don't butt your way into something, and then when you find you've come up against a roadblock, or you've come into difficulties, then you go to prayer. That is the problem. Pray before you've got the problem. Pray before the difficulty arises, and you will save yourself a lot of headache.

But principle number one is: be steadfast, on a daily basis, moment-by-moment in prayer.

1. **Prayer Brings the Believer the Help He Needs**

The second thing the Word of God stresses is that prayer brings the believer the help and the direction he needs every day of his life, as he moves through the angelic warfare of Satan and his demons. James 4:2 says, "You lust and have not; you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not." And what James is saying is: "If you ask, you'll get the help."

1. **Prayer is to be our Way of Life**

Principle number three: the Bible stresses that prayer is to be our way of life, not only under pressure, but when things are going well. So, invest the time, and take the trouble. Most of us say, "Why do I need to invest the time and trouble when everything's OK? I use prayer as my way out – when things aren't going well. That is a bad mistake. One of the signs of Christian maturity is that a Christian begins finding that he's praying on a constant basis all day long, with everything he's coming up against. It's just a normal part of his operating procedure. He does not think of doing something without praying.

It's kind of exciting – about the time you'll pray for something, bingo – a thought comes into your mind, and there is the answer. And you just know that God has shot something into your brain, right then? And you're very much aware of it. As a matter of fact, you'll find yourself looking around to see that He's standing right there next to you, when He shot that into your head. I mean, it is awesome. You're thinking through a problem: "What do I have to do? We're getting ready to go to camp. I need – Oh, you're right, Lord. Bingo!" A thought comes in. It is something you haven't thought of, and you would never thought of. It's one of those little fringe things, and all of a sudden, it pops up to the center of your mind. Is it accidental? Don't you kid yourself. Your prayer of preparation has brought God to your assistance, so that you covered something that you might have missed it. Do it before the trouble.

1. **Realize your Helplessness**

Principal number four: once you and I realize that we are not self-contained, all-powerful creatures, then prayer will become even more important to us. When we realize our helplessness to make things happen, then we will be driven to prayer. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need." Come boldly before God's throne to find the grace for the help that you need in your time of need. When you are aware that you are helpless, you'll be there more often.

1. **Prayer if Only for Believers**

Effect effective prayer is based on following God's prescribed procedures. That includes personal salvation. That gives you the right to ask God. If you're not a Christian, you don't have any right to pray. You can go ahead and go through the motions, but I can assure you that God's not listening. You have to be a Christian for God to pay attention to you. Being a Christian means that you must have accepted Christ is your personal Savior. Thus you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. You're in Christ. You're in the family of God. And now you've got the ear of God. If you are an unbeliever, and unbelievers like to gather together, and go through the formality of prayer, it's a meaningless, pointless thing. That's principle number one if you want to pray.

1. **Believe in the Reality of Prayer**

Next, there must be a belief in the reality of prayer. If, when you talk about praying and you exercise prayer, all it is to you is soap bubbles being blown in the air that are going to pop into nothing, then God's not going to be interested in what you have to say either. Matthew 21:22 puts it this way: "In all things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

1. **The guidance of the Holy Spirit**

There must also, of course, be the guidance of the Spirit of God in prayer. Otherwise you're going to pray amiss. In Jude 20, we are told, therefore, that we must be praying under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: as those who have been filled with the Spirit, because we have confessed our sins first: "But you, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit."

1. **Pray in God's Will**

There must, of course, be the Spirit of subjection to God's will, and there must be the proper order. You do not pray to Jesus. You do not pray to the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:20 says that we address our prayers to God the Father, and that's the only One to Whom we pray.

1. **Pray in the Name of Jesus, the Son**

Secondly, Ephesians 5:20 also tells us that we pray on the basis of the authority, or in the name, of Jesus, the Son.

1. **Pray in the Power of God the Holy Spirit**

Ephesians 6:18 tells us that we pray in the power of God the Holy Spirit, who guides us in our prayer, and even offers prayers that we ourselves just don't know how to put into words, or have not thought of. So, don't teach your children to say, "Dear Jesus," and pray to the Lord Jesus. You pray to God the Father.

1. **Pray Anywhere and Anytime**

Furthermore, you may pray anywhere and anytime, in any posture.

1. **God Works for us Only through Prayer**

Next, God has sovereignly elected to work for us only through prayer. We have seen that in John 14:13-14 and in Matthew 7:7. God says, "The way I do things is through prayer." Why does He do that? He hasn't explained that to us. He only has told us that that's how He works.

Notice John 14:13-14: "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 (that is, according to the will of God, then you can approach Him on the name of Jesus), I will do it.

We also have, in Matthew 7:7, this statement: "Ask, and it should be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." What these verses are telling us is that God works only through prayer, and therefore, the smart people use prayer.

1. **God Knows All of our Needs**

The next point about the technique of prayer is that we should be aware that God knows all of the things that we need. He knows what we should ask for before we do. Yet we must ask to receive. Matthew 6:7-8 put it this way: "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions as the pagans do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Have you ever heard somebody praying who constantly reiterate the name of God? "God, give us this. God, we need this. God, we need it." Or, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." These are vain repetitions. This is what the pagans do. The pagans make this more efficient.

When I was in China visiting a Lama temple, I walked by a whole row of wheels, and as I looked more closely, there were pieces of paper on the wheels. And I realized that this was a prayer wheel. Because they wanted to reiterate their prayers to their spirit ancestors efficiently, they put it on a wheel, and then just circled the wheel. So, I just walked right down, and I spun every wheel, going by. And off those prayers flew to who-knows-where. No, no prayer went anywhere. This is vain repetition, and the Lord says that that doesn't accomplish anything. And I think also that being heard for your much speaking is not going to get you someplace. Get your prayers to the point, and don't use a lot of extraneous speaking like you're trying to convince God of something. And don't preach in your prayers either. But really talk to God, and do the asking.

Verse 8 says, "Be not, therefore, like unto them (unto the heathen). For your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him." So, get to the point, and ask what you need.

1. **Confess your Sins**

There is one thing concerning those who are Christians, who have the right to approach God the Father in prayer, that you should be aware of, and that is that He only answers prayer of those who are in fellowship with Him. In 1 Peter 3:12, we read, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." God does not listen to the prayers of unbelievers. He listens only to the prayers of believers, but he does not listen to the prayers of unrighteous believers. If your life is a life that's walking in sin, you can pray yourself blue in the face. You can be in the most desperate situation (it could be life or death), and God will not hear you. He does not answer the prayer of those who are out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship. Your sins must be confessed. That opens the door to prayer.

**Prayerlessness**

Prayerlessness is a very great sin. And when it happens, it needs to be confessed and corrected. This is probably one of the sins that Christians need to confess more than anything else. But do you hear anybody on television making big issues over the fact that somebody in the religious field (a leader) is not praying enough? No, they make a big thing about his sexual immorality or something like that, because that's real sin. God says, "The real sin is lack of prayer." It was Samuel, you remember, who, on one occasion said, "God forbid that I should sin against you if I fail to pray for you." Samuel knew that failure to execute his mission of prayer, as he should as a believer, was a terrible gross sin, and it needs to be confessed, and it needs to be corrected.

If we prayed more, all of our lives would be a lot better; we'd be a lot happier; and, the goals that you pursue would come into better focus as to what you should do with your life, so that someday in God's presence, you will be pleased with what you have done, and you will be delighted that you paid attention to the Word of God.

Romans 12:13, which we shall look at in the next session, is about being sociable; running parties; having a good time; and, welfare programs – maybe government welfare, and other kinds, are of great interest to you. Here's a verse that deals with the solution to all human needs, and it is the one that is violated on every account in our society today. It's really a joke to read a verse like this, and see the simple solution as you begin pursuing the implications of this statement in Scripture, and seeing the results. So, join us for sure next time, as we go on with these practical applications of the Word of God to our lives.

Please remember that Paul says, "Here is a trilogy for your guidance: Rejoice in the hope that is yours as a Christian in Christ; stay under the tribulation that comes to you, because you're a Christian, true and faithful to Christ; and, continue diligently practicing prayer as the servant of Christ so that Satan cannot defeat you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)