

Keep in Touch

by Howard Barnes

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and worship in a Christian's life, highlighting the components, characteristics, and benefits of prayer, as well as the definition and importance of worship.

Scripture: Psalm 27:11

Topics: "Prayer", "Worship"

Description

Howard Barnes emphasizes the importance of prayer and worship as great privileges for Christians on earth. Prayer involves various components like intercession, meditation, petition, adoration, confession, and thanksgiving, while worship originates from our connection with heaven. Effective prayer requires persistence, faith, knowledge, holy living, and reverence, and should be addressed to the Father, in the Spirit, and through the Son. Worship involves complete self-diminishing and focusing solely on the worth of God the Father and the Son, seeking true worshippers who worship in spirit and truth.

Transcript

Prayer to and worship of our God and Father must surely be one of the Christian's greatest privileges while here on earth. It is a privilege we need to appreciate and appropriate more.

Prayer stems from the fact that we are still connected with earth; contrast worship, which originates in our connection with heaven. Like the air we breathe, prayer is made up of many components. Included are:

Intercession: for those who cannot or do not pray (Lk. 23:34).

Meditation: a prayerful attitude in contemplating God's Word (Ps. 27:11).

Petition: for our own and fellow believers' needs (1 Thess. 5:25).

Adoration: concerning what He is (see later).

Confession: of known sin (1 Jn. 1:9).

Thanksgiving: for His blessings (1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 8:16).

Prayer, to be most effective, should be characterized by persistence (1 Thess. 5:17), faith (Jas. 5:15), knowledge (1 Cor. 14:15), holy living (Jas. 5:16), and reverence (Mt. 6:9).

Prayer is generally addressed to the Father, should be in the Spirit, and is presented through the Son (Eph. 3:14; Jude 20; Jn. 14:14). Public prayer, in a mixed congregation, is to be carried out by "the men," (1 Tim. 2:8, RV) with the women's heads covered (1 Cor. 11:13).

The Lord Jesus, as the pattern Man, and as our true example, has left the record of a life of constant private and public prayer, before and during every event of His life (e.g. Lk. 6:12; 23:34), even on the cross.

Continual prayer characterized the early church (Acts 2:42; 4:31), which "advanced on its knees," and constant prayer is commended by the apostle Paul (1 Thess. 5:17).

Prayer, although as natural to a Christian as a child speaking to his father, like natural speech, has to be learned. The disciples acknowledged this in asking the Lord to teach them to pray, just as John Baptist had taught his disciples (Lk. 11:1).

Prayer, when learned and practiced, becomes the means of two-way communication between earth and heaven. We are able to speak to our Father in heaven, and He is able to send blessing to earth by means of our prayers. Unbelievers have severed connections between a holy heaven and a sinful earth, but the Christian stands as the link, for though on earth, he has audience in heaven.

The passage of prayer to heaven can be interfered with, just as radio waves can be interrupted by adverse conditions. Unconfessed sin in the life of the believer leads to our prayers not being heard: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven," said the Lord to Israel (2 Chron. 7:14). A bad conscience is sure to wreck our prayer life. We are told to hold "faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:19). Of vain repetitive prayers (Mt. 6:7) we know:

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Scripturally approved subjects for prayer include: the Lord's servants and their work for Him (1 Thess. 5:25), for more servants to be sent out (Mt. 9:38), for one another (Jas. 5:16), for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Prayer is to be associated with faith (Mt. 8:13; 21:21,22; Jas. 1:6-8). In particular, notice Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." The Greek word here rendered "receive" occurs 237 times in the New Testament. It is translated 133 times as "receive" and 104 times as "take." It denotes the definite act of faith which receives or takes the thing asked for.

Of course the prayer of faith grows. George Muller, whose life was marked by remarkable answers to prayer, testified that through sixty years his faith had steadily grown. Shortly before his death he said, "Today, if it were the will of God, I could as easily trust God for a million dollars as I could have trusted Him for a few rolls for breakfast in the early years of our orphanage work." God asks us to believe Him for small things before He gives us the conviction concerning His will to pray the prayer of faith for a greater thing. Of course, being in the will of God is the secret of successful prayer. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1 Jn. 5:14). Also see Luke 11:1-13.

When this is so, something does take place as a result of our prayers, which otherwise would not take place, either before (Isa. 65:24), during (Dan. 9:23), or after (2 Cor. 1:11; Philemon 22) our prayers.

Lastly, when all is done, and we feel perhaps we have failed, we remember that the Spirit Himself "maketh intercession for us" when we do not know how to pray as we ought (Rom. 8:26).

Such phrases as "bowed down," "bend the knee," "fell down," "fell at his feet" characterize worship, because it is a complete diminishing of self, which sinks out of view as we become occupied in thought and word with only the worth and value of God the Father and the Son, through the Spirit. This is the highest occupation of redeemed man. It can be imitated but not substituted.

Worship is above prayer, although while we are still "in the flesh," it usually follows it, for the unburdened heart becomes a liberated, worshipping heart. Although the Father is seeking worshippers, He does not do so without reference to His eternal standards, for they that worship God must worship Him "in spirit and in truth." The Lord Jesus taught this to one who had a wrong idea of the location and condition for worship (Jn. 4:21). The Father is seeking true (real, genuine) worshippers as opposed to those who were "apparent, false or pseudo."

In the past, worship had always been characterized by specific locations (Gen. 22:5) and conditions (24:26; Ex. 4:31). But worship today is "in spirit," not in a place or building, and "in truth" as the correct condition.

The Old Testament ends its consideration of worship by mentioning the future worship of the divine King (Zech. 14:16, 18). The New Testament opens with the wise men's searching question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him" (Mt. 2:2). Matthew often tells us that the Lord Jesus was the object of worship: of the leper who came and, "worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (8:2), a certain ruler who came "and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live" (9:18), the disciples who "came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (14:33), the Syro-phoenician woman who "worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me" (15:25), and the other of Zebedee's children who came to him "worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him." (20:20). How little worship our Lord receives from His creatures today, but all in heaven worship Him. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). Let us take advantage of the privilege of prayer and the honor of worship today.

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