

## Prayer - The Mortar Of Our Faith (Part 1 of 3)

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Let's begin by asking the most basic question we can regarding prayer?

### What is prayer?

Prayer is communicating with God. It is speaking with God and to God. We tend to think of prayer as our asking God for something that will benefit us or someone else, but there are many different ways that prayer is expressed in scripture

In the Old Testament there are five different words for prayer:

1. 8605 intercession, deprecation for any one; supplication. What I found to be interesting in this particular word was the further word for intercession, deprecation. I had to look that one up, never having heard it used in this vernacular before. We find this usage in II Kings 19:4; Isa 37:4; Jeremiah 7:16 and 11:14.

Let's look at these passages and see what it means and how it's being used.

II Kings 19:4. What do we find here? King Hezekiah is sending his servant Eliakim, along with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests to the prophet Isaiah. The request is that Isaiah will speak to God on their behalf, (remember, prophets spoke to God in a very unique way in those days, just as all believers can speak to him today.) They are asking Isaiah to rebuke the words spoken by the Assyrians, the challenge in God's face, if you will, that no God is able to stop the Assyrians. They are asking Isaiah to pray and stay the hand of the enemy by coming against their words in prayer.

In other words, we don't believe these words the Assyrians have spoken, but we know unanswered words have power behind them and we are asking you, Isaiah, to speak to God, to nullify the power behind these threats upon us. They are depreciating, giving no value or power to these words and threats that have been spoken against them, by wanting the word of the Lord to come forth on their behalf. Look at how God answers them in Isaiah 19:6-7. Look further in verse 10-37. The enemy through Rabshakeh once again speaks and writes words that encourage Israel to turn away from their God and His protection.

King Hezekiah, in verse 14, takes these letters, reads them and immediately turns to God by going to the temple and spreads out the written threats of his enemies before the throne of the Lord. He recognizes God's sovereignty, "thou art the God" (vs 15) and that he had complete authority over what he has created. He also recognizes that the other nations were overcome and their Gods thrown into the fire because they were not

truly Gods. Hezekiah requests that God save his people and show the world that Jehovah was the only true God.

In other words, he doesn't believe the lies of the enemy, he believes in his God and through intercessory prayer, deprecating prayer, prayer which comes against the lies of the enemy and tears them down, he states his faith in the true and living God, Jehovah, thus nullifying the power of the lies the enemy tried to put into his mind and the fear he tried to bring into his heart and spirit.

What are we told to do today, when threats and words are spoken against us? We are to speak the word of the Lord into the situation, just as Isaiah did. We are to declare openly and boldly that Jehovah is the only true and living God. Why? This gets into our spirit man and builds our faith and our ability to withstand the lies of the enemy.

What happened as a result of Hezekiah's faith and deprecating prayer?

Verse 20 God responds through Isaiah, saying very clearly that he, God has heard Hezekiah's prayers and responds with a tremendous prophecy, stating very clearly what he will do to the Assyrian army.

Verse 35 tells us that it happened, just as the Lord promised.

Verse 37 tells us what happened to the king who declared himself stronger and mightier than God.

What application for this kind of prayer can we find in the news today?

Who is being openly attacked by those in power in the senate and house, attempting to stop a real man of God from being seated as the next attorney general? Why doesn't the enemy want this man in this position?

Our prayers before God can stop the lies of the enemy and bring about a mighty defeat of his power in our nations capitol.

What can you and I do about it? Let's do it now!

Is. 37: 4 is the same story, having the same meaning of intercession.

Jeremiah 7:16 is speaking of God speaking through the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Judah, especially those who are coming into the temple to worship the Lord. God himself is speaking of the atrocities the Israelites are committing. In verse 12 he directs Jeremiah to go to Shiloh, where the Israelites had set up idols in the temple and ' see what God did to it, because of the wickedness of the people.'

God goes on with Jeremiah in verse 16, telling him not to pray, to supplicate, not to try to deprecate or make little of what the people have done. Don't try to change my mind with your words of intercession on their behalf, because I won't hear you.

Jeremiah 11:14 is saying exactly the same thing. Again the Lord is speaking to Jeremiah, telling him to remind the people of the covenant and to hear the words of the covenant.

Verse 8 says in spite of all he has done, they will not hear, not obey and in fact, in verse 9 he says they have made a conspiracy. The breaking of the covenant was the first of three conspiracies in this message. It was, in fact, a national conspiracy against God. So widespread was their idolatry that their idols were more numerous than the streets of Jerusalem and the cities in Judah. The covenant had been broken, therefore, there was no reason to intercede for the people. I will not hear them.

Verse 14 says, don't pray, don't intercede, don't try to change my mind with your words that will hold weight with me. I won't hear your pleas on their behalf.

So, this meaning of prayer is one that will tear down or change the words or prayers of those who come against us. We pray, we intercede to God to make of no value the things that have been sent against us. We can do this because our words have "weight" with God. He listens to what we say to him and sees if they agree with his principles and his word.

2. 6419 the general overall meaning is one of judging, which means to decide by comparison with.

In other words, when the threat of attack came against Jews, in Neh 4:19, because they were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, their enemies conspired together to come and fight against them. Verse 10 says "but we prayed, interceded to our God." we made supplication to him who is able to judge correctly by comparing motives, etc. It goes on to say that they "set up a guard against them day and night.

How can we apply this today? What attack is against the people of God in the world today? We are told to "make supplication for all the saints, leaders in authority, rulers, etc." the reason being, God will judge their motives when we do and respond accordingly. We set up "watchmen on the walls" in prayer over our nation and the nations of the world that the ancient walls, the ruins of what God desires upon this earth may be rebuilt. When we do this, God honors his word and responds to our prayers.

3. 7878 to produce with the mouth, to bring forth, to put forth, to germinate, to flourish, to put forth shoots, buds, to lift oneself up with the mouth.

In Job 15:4 the way this word is being used is somewhat different. Job's friends are taking him to task for his mournful lamentations regarding all that has happened to him. In verse 4 a more serious accusation is leveled against Job. Eliphaz, one of Job's friends is saying that not only are you hurting yourself when you speak this way, you are harming us also. They fear that Job's arguments in his own behalf will undermine fear of God and by extension, eventually undermine social order and morality. Does this sound familiar to anyone? USA

In other words, they are saying to Job, "you are producing nothing good from your mouth. You are bringing forth death and not life with your words, by restraining yourself from honoring God and praising him. You are not putting forth anything which will bring forth life, only death. You are not lifting yourself up in any way, only putting yourself down and it's going to reflect upon us and the entire society around you. And, you are choosing to do so by refusing to pray before God and allowing negative words to come forth from your mouth..

Application: what do the words of our mouths create? When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances as Job did, are our words before God bringing forth praise? Are they germinating life in our spirits and those around us? Are we lifting ourselves up with

praise and worship and positive comments or are we dragging ourselves and those around us down with negatives? Are we questioning what God says about us and saying just the opposite?

What are we doing to our families, at our jobs and in our churches when we choose not to pray before the living God? What example are we giving our children and non-believers when we choose not to praise and worship from a heart of gratitude, no matter what the circumstances? Anyone in the world can gripe, they see that all the time. What would seeing us praise in a difficult circumstance allow them to see? There is hope beyond what the world has to offer them. Children will see that there is a way out of difficult places without having to kill, steal or destroy.

4. 3908 Isaiah 26:16 a whispering, i.e. prayers uttered in a low voice. This passage in Isaiah is a picture of the redeemed who enter the millennial kingdom. In these verses 14-16 Isaiah predicts that God will ordain peace for his elect ones whose salvation is the result of his work in them. In spite of the idolatry of his beloved Israel he will redeem them and bring them unto himself. They realize that all the gods they had turned to could never deliver them. They are dead gods. In verse 16 we have a description of a nation of people who have been under the chastisement of God for this idolatry and in their worst times, even when they could not pray aloud, they whispered prayers that were heard by God. In their pain they cried out to their God in their souls with whispered prayers and he heard and will deliver them.

Application: no matter where we are, no matter how difficult the circumstances, even if we are told we cannot pray out loud, God will hear the prayer that is whispered in faith before his throne and he will deliver his children.

5. 2470 Daniel 9:13 to stroke or to soothe, as of the face of another, in order to entreat or ask or imploring any one's favor.

This passage in Daniel tells us that as a result of neglecting God's law, persecution came upon Israel, just as God had promised. Yet, even in the midst of all that, as Daniel notes, they refused to pray or to turn from their iniquities and understand your truth. (vs 13) they refused to come to God, looking upon him with intimacy, as this word would indicate they had the option to do. Stroking one's face and pleading with them for something indicates you are extremely close to that person. You don't do this with a stranger. Yet, God is inviting his children to do so. To come close to him, stroke his face and entreat, implore and ask him for these things that they needed.

The point here is they refused to do so.....they are still in captivity, they refuse to confess their sin before God.

Daniel's prayer in this passage (verse 3) takes place after Daniel had been in captivity for nearly seventy years. He knew that God's prophecies through Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12) were nearly fulfilled and that God might allow his people to return to Palestine.

Daniel 9: 16-19 as a result, Daniel sought God by prayer and supplications. He entreated God, he stroked his face, he implored God. Daniel confessed his own sin and the sins of his people and begged God to be merciful in allowing them to return to their homeland. Daniel's prayer begins with confession and then moves to a contemplation of some of the great attributes of Jehovah.

Look at the Lord's prayer in the John 17 and you will see the exact same pattern.

Daniel associated himself with the sins of the people. He did not consider himself to be above others in righteousness. A nation's sins must be confessed by God's people if they seek God's mercy for their land.

Daniel acknowledges the sin is at all levels, all classes of people and he reminds God of his attributes of mercies and forgiveness. (vs 9)

Application:

Nation, loved ones, enemies (pray for your enemies), co-workers, employers who are just or unjust, immediate bosses. Who else?

New testament meanings of prayer:

1. 4335 Matthew 17:21 prayer addressed to God.

Jesus told us that this is how we are to make our requests known to God, by asking him for what we need. So basic prayer is addressing God directly, rather than through the prophet or priest, because in the new covenant, we are the prophets and the priests and kings.

In the old covenant the people had to go through a mediator to get to God. In the new covenant, Jesus himself is our mediator and we can ask the father anything, if we ask in his name.

In this passage of scripture in Matthew we see Jesus coming upon some of his disciples who were attempting to cure a lunatic, epileptic, etc.

Jesus said, "faithless and perverse generation, how long must I suffer you? Bring him here to me." when the disciples asked why they could not cast out the demons Jesus told them, "because of your unbelief." he proceeds to give them the teaching on the "mustard seed" faith, and then comments that this particular demon goes out or is driven out by prayer and fasting.

Things of the spiritual realm are not under our dominion unless the Father gives us his authority to operate in them. The disciples did not yet have this authority and yet were attempting to cast out demons in their own power or "level of faith", based upon what they had seen Jesus do. Their faith was based upon experience, rather than the name and power of Jesus, through which and on which we must totally depend for all things if we are to move in his power and strength.

We see the same experience happen (Acts 19:14) when the family of vagabond Jews, composed of Sceva, a priest and his seven sons had been watching Paul do his mighty miracles and decided to do an exorcism of their own.

After listening to Paul use the name of Jesus to command evil spirits to come out of people, they attempted to use the same name as a sort of magical charm. Naturally, the demons jumped on them, beat them up, and stripped them naked.

Exorcism is dangerous unless the exorcist is anointed to do so by the holy spirit and is dealing genuinely with real demon powers. They were trying to exorcise demons based upon watching what someone else did, rather than by relying upon Jesus and his power.

I believe Jesus was saying in this passage in Matthew that we need to pray and fast, seeking God for the anointing of the holy spirit before we "jump into the water."

Unbelief, or a lack of real faith in who Jesus was, caused them to be without spiritual power. Someone else's experience doesn't cut it.

Remember, Jesus had not yet revealed himself to them yet. They had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit. They were still being brought to the point where there was no longer any doubt as to who Jesus was and what his power could do. Growing in faith is a process in our lives.

So, if we want this kind of power, pray and fast and ask God to change your heart. Ask him to bring about the needed growth and change in your life.

7. 1162 Luke 1:13 contextually, of prayers imploring God's aid in some particular matter.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, had been praying, either for a son, or for the coming of the Messiah or for both, for the angel said his prayer is heard. We know that evidently part of the prayer was for a son, for the angel announced that a son would be born and his name was to be called John. Also, within a short time after, John's cousin, Jesus the messiah was born.

So Zacharias had been praying for a particular thing or matter and his prayer was answered.

Application: coming national elections, state and local elections, Iraq, needed changes in the thinking of the people of the united states; ie. Removal of the deceiving spirits over their minds; re-taking of the media to an unbiased state, etc.

8. 1783 I Tim. 4:5 the overall meaning is a falling in with, meeting with. An interview, a coming together, to visit, to converse, or for any other cause.

Specifically, in this scripture, it means to meet with God in a time of prayer or intercession. In Timothy 4:5 the context of scripture is the fact that the spirit of God is saying that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, etc. It is a warning of how the enemy will come in and try to distort the word of God, i.e.. homo-sexual agenda....

The particular reference here is the issue of food, not simply animal meat as the vegetarians try to use it. The bible says "marriage" and "meats" were created by God and are not to be refused. Verse 5 in particular teaches us that by coming to the table with a heart of thanksgiving to God for what has provided for us and praying over the food causes it to be sanctified for our use, as the temple food for the priests was considered holy, because it was offered to God first. The blessing at the table is not simply a ritual, it is scriptural. Thanksgiving to God has a sanctifying effect on the food. It is then "set apart" for the use of those who are holy in God's sight. Vincent, in his book "word studies in the new testament", puts it this way. "not declared holy but made holy. The food itself has no moral quality (Rom. 14:14) but acquires a holy quality by its consecration to God; by being acknowledged as God's gift and eaten as something that will nourish us to allow us to continue in service to God."

Application:

So, by falling in with God, by meeting with him over our food with a prayer of thanksgiving, we come together to "break bread" that has been sanctified and set apart for our use, that we may continue to serve him.

9. 2171 James 5:15 the context of this scripture is regarding physical afflictions, illnesses, etc. The reference is the "prayer of faith." and, it means simply this: a prayer made in faith to almighty God. A prayer of childlike, simple trusting faith in God and who he says he is and what he says he will do, he will do.

All too often prayers for healing bear little fruit, but the prayer of faith, of unqualified trust, will deliver. Nothing about the passage requires instantaneous healing, nor is there any restriction in scripture regarding medical treatment. The presence of sins may be the cause for the sickness, but not necessarily. We must reserve that judgment for God alone.

The phrase "they shall be forgiven: assumes that the one who seeks help from the elders of the church also recognizes his personal sins and shortcomings.

Application: we are to lay hand on and pray for the sick, that they may recover, trusting that God knows the heart of the individual and he will do what is right in that situation. Keep in mind that this is a different situation from the "gift of healing," mentioned in I Cor. 12. The gift of healing manifests in "instantaneous healings."

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So then, we have seen nine different words in scripture regarding the specific word prayer, five in the Old Testament and 4 in the New Testament.

The first one was a word for intercession, but not asking for something for self, but as a warfare scripture, to thwart and block the words, the forces of evil set in motion against us by our enemies, through threats, curses, rebukes, etc. Our intercession is before God, asking him to deliver us from these things that have been sent against us.

When we do this, we declare to all that he is our defender, our high tower, our strong defense, our mighty warrior king, our shield and buckler. All of scripture defines the Lord in this light. "The battle is mine, the victory is yours." We must depend upon the Lord to do the battle for us in the spiritual realm. We cannot fight spiritual foes without his spiritual power behind our words.

The second application of this word we found is God saying don't make these supplications, don't even ask me, even though I know your prayers your intercession carry weight with me, don't ask. Don't take down or make light of the sins of the people with your prayers to me. Your intercession will carry no weight with me this time. The people have gone too far.

So this kind of prayer, that Jeremiah normally prayed on behalf of the people of God, obviously had weight, merit and favor with God. If God told him not to pray for them, i.e. James 5:16 the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."Fervent" means intense, hot, with great ardor. We can prevail with God and see many good responses if our prayers are fervent before him. If we really believe that he is hearing and will answer us.

This kind of prayer will tear down the words of the enemy spoken over us and into our spirits.

How many prayers like that do you hear today?

The second word was a prayer of judging. When we pray fervently, God will judge between the motives of those praying against us and the motives of our hearts and will answer accordingly. Sometimes we pray amiss, as the scriptures say, and God does not give us what we ask for because our motives are wrong. But when the motives are right, he will render a judgment in our favor, versus what the enemy has sent against us.

I believe the Lord will sometimes allow the enemy to continue a work against us when our motives need to be corrected in something. I believe that is one reason why things sometimes do not change in our lives, in spite of constant prayer. We need to check our motives. Not always, but sometimes.

The third word for prayer meant that the words of our mouths would produce, bring forth, cause to germinate, to flourish, to put forth shoots, buds and to lift oneself up with our mouths.

This is a creative prayer. We can change the spiritual atmosphere around us by the words of our mouths, as Jobs' friends were indicating. Whatever we speak gets into our hearts and spirits and whatever is within us will be what comes forth. We can plant good seed in our spirits and hearts or bad seeds of "weeds." we can bring forth death or life. It is in the power of the tongue. As James 3:5 says "so also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest fire is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life and is set on fire by hell.

We must use our mouths wisely, speaking in agreement what the word of the Lord says, especially in our prayers. We must produce good fruit from our prayers. We must speak what God says in any given situation, especially about ourselves.

The fourth word is the "whispering prayers, or prayers uttered in a low voice." God wants us to remember that the prayer uttered in faith in his name, no matter how feeble, no matter how quiet, so as not to be heard by others, is heard by the ear of God. The prayers that are cried in our inner heart are heard by and acted upon by God. Never think that because you can't pray out loud that God cannot hear and will not answer you.

The fifth word for prayer is the "stroking the face" in supplication and imploring. This is a prayer of intimacy. This is the prayer of a wife or husband who is begging, pleading, imploring their loved one for a favor. We see from several passages in scripture that God stayed his hand of judgment or extended favor when it wasn't his intention to do so, when one who knew him well interceded and implored him to do so. When we know God well, we do not fear to go to him and stroke his face in love, on behalf of those who do not know him or desperately need his love. We stand in the gap for those who cannot pray, as Jesus did for us, in intimacy with the father.

The sixth word was a New Testament word meaning simply prayer directly addressed to God, with only Jesus as our mediator. We no longer have to go through a priest, a prophet, we now have the privilege of approaching him ourselves. It is a prayer of basic asking for our needs, in childlike faith. We can do so because we have been given the power and authority as his children, to act in the name of Jesus; to act as his ambassadors upon the earth and in the spiritual realm.



The seventh word is a form of intercession of imploring the favor of God in a particular manner for a particular thing; i. e. Zacharias imploring God for a son and possibly for the coming of the Messiah; very specific prayers, very specific answers; both were in the will of God and were answered.

However, we know that Zachariah prayed a long time for a son and for the Messiah so it tells us that these kinds of prayers are not always answered immediately, but in the perfect will and timing of God. We must not give up when we are praying specifically.

The eighth prayer is one of falling in with, meeting with for a specific purpose, to converse with for a cause.

In other words, these are prayers given at a specific time, for an expressed purpose of meeting with God. Our example was the blessing of food, that it would be sanctified for our use, that as his priests, we may continue to serve him in good health all of our days.

The ninth and final meaning of prayer was the "prayer of faith" and the context was in regarding prayer for afflictions, illnesses, etc. It simply means a childlike prayer, made in faith to almighty God. The word says the prayer of faith, of unqualified trust, will deliver.

Thank you for visiting our website. We trust you have enjoyed this message and will come again next week for a continuing message on prayer and the necessity to live a life of prayer.

Be sure to check out our main page for the archive page for other pertinent teachings. We'd welcome your comments and suggestions and don't forget to send us your prayer requests.

Blessings & Love,  
Rev. Gerie Martin