

Pray, then, in this way...

Dear brethren,

I have been considering with you the importance of seeing clearly and being deeply convicted it is **feasible for believers to learn and grow and have an abiding sense of true peace and well-being under all circumstances**

- whether it be the current pandemic or whatever we may have to go through in the future
- and **how this can be true for our personal lives and our working out together.**

In the last three sharing, I considered with you one vital area we need to pay attention to: **pure in heart.**

We saw:

One who is pure in heart is a person whose heart is washed, cleansed and consecrated to God.

Two major aspects

1. **State of heart:** clean, cleansed, no stain, defilement
2. **Direction of heart:** what **motivates** us
 - **a heart focused on/immersed in God** and His righteousness, **love, light and truth - God's kingdom, God's will** and the fulfilment of His purposes
 - **oneness** of our heart with the heart of God
 - **committed** to God, God's will and the fulfilment of God's purposes.

Nurturing a heart that is increasingly pure in meaning and quality is what the Lord Jesus seeks to bring about in our lives - at the core centre of His preaching and teaching

- including His teaching us how to pray
- what I intend to consider with you now.

The Lord Jesus teaches us how to pray

There is an important passage in the Scriptures on the preaching and teaching of the Lord Jesus on the subject of prayer.

Matthew 6:9–13

9 “Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 ‘Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.’

The Lord Jesus teaching us to pray in this way means:

All true prayer ought to flow forth from and reflect the deep longings, burdens and concerns in our hearts reflected in these verses.

v.9: “Pray, then, in this way

The Lord Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray and what to pray for.

Take note that this teaching on prayer is part of the Sermon on the Mount.

It comes after the beatitudes and a key verse in the Scriptures on the pure in heart:

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The pure in heart ought to pray in this way

- the prayer of one who is committed to God, God's name and glory, God's kingdom and God's will
- what is in the heart of God and the fulfilment of God's purposes
- one whose heart is one with God and God's heart.

Let us now reflect on the **meaning and implications of the text** in these verses.

v.9: “Pray, then, in this way...

We are to pay close attention to the meaning and implications of what the Lord Jesus teaches in this passage on prayer.

- It teaches us how to nurture our prayer life and learn to pray in a manner pleasing to God
- Pay attention to what is in our heart from which our prayer requests flow
- What to concentrate on in prayer
- Helps us evaluate effectiveness of prayer

v.9: ‘Our Father who is in heaven...

‘Our Father’:

To whom we address our prayers – who we pray to:

Address God the Father in prayer

- most appropriate
- should normally do so
- rather than ‘the Lord Jesus’ or ‘the Holy Spirit’.

This is what the Lord Jesus teaches us

- exemplified in His own prayer life e.g. **Jn 17**

Likewise, the example of Paul e.g. **Eph 3:14; 1:15-17**

It is proper to worship the Lord Jesus

- and at times address Him in prayer
- e.g. Stephen: **Acts 7:59:** ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’
- but generally, our prayer should be to God the Father.

‘Our Father’:

- **indicates recognition of our position and privilege.**

He is our Father who loves us and cares for us.

- important to approach God with this consciousness

- what the Holy Spirit teaches us to recognise and cry out:

Romans 8:15

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Each time we address God as 'our Father', it should go together with a heart of **gratitude** to God for sending Christ into this world - and to the Lord Jesus for what was accomplished at the Cross - so that we can become God's children.

'Our Father':

1. Consciousness we are not merely many individuals praying to God but **joining our hearts in spirit with all God's children praying to God** - our lives bound up with others

- not alone but member of family, household of God
- together with others with same goal, direction, purpose
- importance of true unity, fellowship recognised
- member of universal church
- local expression of body-life and church life.

2. One Father: all believers are His children

- though roles may differ, **essentially equal in worth and dignity as human beings before God – His children**
- no higher or lower class of race or beings.

3. The Lord Jesus addresses the same One 'Father'

- reminds us the Scriptures teaches us **the Lord Jesus regards us His brethren**

Hebrews 2:11

For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

v.9: 'Our Father who is in heaven...

Not our earthly father with all his weaknesses, imperfections, limitations

- not human like us but **our heavenly Father.**

The transcendent, majestic, great, almighty God

Right from the initial stages of prayer,

consciousness of being in the presence of the great almighty God and all His attributes,

omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotent,

good, wise, perfect God – God of love and grace

sovereign, seated on His glorious, heavenly throne

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1. worship: v.9 implies beginning prayer with worship

- and continue to pray with this posture of worship.
- illustrated in the way the disciples began their prayer in

Acts 4:24

And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,

This great almighty God is our heavenly Father

- transcendent, great God
- infinitely greater than us frail, finite beings
- yet concern for our well-being – for each one of us

Psalms 138:6

For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly,
But the haughty He knows from afar.

God cares but not indulgent Father who gives carelessly

- He gives us what is good for us

Matthew 7:11

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

He knows what is best for us - **including discipline**

Hebrews 12:4–11

4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

2. Proper place for confidence – in Him

- whatever we may be going through.

Do we feel anxious, weak, helpless?

- the almighty God is our heavenly Father.

As we walk with Him

We can always look to Him for **grace and peace**

Ephesians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can always **rejoice** – in Him

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

His grace is always sufficient for us

- whatever we may be going through
- He can meet our every need

2 Corinthians 12:9

And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Let His greatness drive away our anxiety and sense of hopelessness, helplessness

- **we can be strong in Him**

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Let us, in prayer, come before God’s presence, **assured** of His love, concern for us as His children, confident in His greatness, all sufficiency

yet not carelessly or with a sense of over familiarity

but know we come before the presence of the holy, almighty God - with proper sense of **reverence, worship**

- thankful and **grateful** for our privilege as His children
- recognising our need to come before Him with a **contrite** spirit

- looking to Him to help us become increasingly pure in heart
- so that we can have deep fellowship with the God who is absolutely pure.

Let us, in prayer, **lift the eyes of our heart upward**

- and not downward or inward or sideways

'who is in heaven':

reminder of our **heavenly vision, perspective, heritage.**

- set your mind on the things above: **Col. 3:2.**

Surrounded daily by the earthly, visible, temporal and worldly views and perspective, it is easy to forget who we are and our purpose on earth, our perspective and the realities in the spiritual realm, our need to walk in the Spirit and battle with divinely powerful weapons.

When we come before God in prayer, it can strengthen our God consciousness and eternal perspective.

We are people with a future in God's eternal kingdom.

Let us not live as if this earth and what takes place here is all there is to it.

Are we able consistently to maintain this consciousness of who we are and our purpose on earth?

- not only when we are amongst believers but wherever we may be
- even when we are in the midst of unbelievers?

Learning to pray as the Lord Jesus teaches can help us nurture and maintain this consciousness.

Let us look a passage in the Scriptures which records for us a prayer which illustrates some of the principles we've considered.

Acts 4:24–30

24 And when they heard this (*context: persecution*), they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, (*corporate, praying with oneness of heart, begin with worship and affirmation of faith in the sovereign, creator God*)

25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?’

26 ‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’ (*quoting of the Scriptures and prophetic content*)

27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. (*recognise God's hand, sovereignly undertaking for the fulfilment of His purposes*)

29 “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, (*recognise there is proper place for true confidence – in the Lord and in serving the Lord, witnessing to the truth of the gospel entrusted to us – even in the face of persecution*)

30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

There is affirmation of faith in God's sovereign undertaking and manifestation of His power – in the accomplishment of His purposes: **v. 27-30.**

At the same time there is no sense of over familiarity but proper reverence for God

- recognising we are His bondservants
- committed to transmission of His word

- the message, the gospel, the good news – the truth
God wants His children to communicate: **v.29.**

Heavenly vision and perspective:

Request for boldness to transmit the word rather than focus on suffering and desire for easier life

- focus on God's will, purpose and God's eternal kingdom.

Concluding remarks

“Pray, then, in this way...”

We must pay close attention to what the Lord Jesus has to say on how to pray and what to pray for.

True prayer is sincere, from our hearts to God

- expressing the deep longings of our hearts
- not empty words.

Our Father who is in heaven

Address the God the Father

Conscious He is our heavenly Father who cares for us

Conscious we are looking to God in prayer together with others in the body of Christ

Approaching and coming into the presence of the transcendent, majestic, great almighty God

- with a spirit of reverence and worship
- confidence, peace and joy in Him, as we walk with Him
- humbly serving Him with a heavenly vision and perspective

- concentrating on God's glory, will and kingdom
- which, the Lord willing, we will consider further in future sharing.

In fellowship,
Kou