

Closer to God Through Prayer & Works



By Rob Pue

July 9, 2023

We live in troubled times. Things have changed. Satan, his demons and his minions among humanity have fundamentally transformed our world into a hideous thing that our forefathers wouldn't recognize. Troubled times, indeed. Perilous times have come.

But, as I've said many times before, as Christ-followers, we have nothing to fear. The worst the world can do to us is end our earthly lives, which would simply send our souls back home to our Lord and Savior. So we need not be fearful. Nor should we be riddled with anxiety and worry. Philippians 4 reminds us, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

We'd do well to follow the instruction of James 4:8, *"Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded."* Our heavenly Father wants a relationship with us – He wants to love us and hold us close to Himself...as a loving earthly father would love his precious children. But we're hard-hearted people, selfish and self-centered. Often we can only focus on what we see here in this world and forgetting God, we struggle through so much on our own.

How sad for the earthly father whose children forget him on Father's Day. How that Dad longs to have a relationship with his kids. How much more does our heavenly Father long for us to seek Him, go to Him, spend time with Him, and love Him with all our hearts.

As a father myself, I'm very blessed to hear from my adult children, and now that they all live far away, it's a very special time when we can be together in person. But if they encounter a situation where they need help, advice or guidance, I'm so blessed that they come to me seeking answers and solutions to their problems, and I'm more than happy to give them the best, wise, Godly advice to help solve those problems. Often times, things that can seem overwhelming to my children, who are young adults now, are "simple fixes" for me. And no matter what situation we find ourselves in as Christ-followers in this world, there's no problem or situation too great for God to handle.

Now, this doesn't mean my kids come to me and automatically get everything they ask for. In fact, in almost every situation, when my kids come to me with a problem, it's a "teachable moment." Since I'm much older than they are, just about every situation they come to me with is something I had to deal with when I was their age. I learned how to handle it and I learned what to do – and what *not* to do, so now, I'm able to offer wise counsel and advice, and by God's grace, sometimes I'm able to just take care of problems and lift the burden from their shoulders. But these are always teachable moments. It's the same with our God – He promises to walk beside His children, care for and teach us through all the trials and tribulations this world will throw at us.

But unlike God, I don't know everything, so sometimes I have things to learn too. This past winter, my daughter called one evening to say she left her car lights on while at work and came out to a dead battery. She asked a co-worker to jump-start her car and then they advised her to let it run a while

so the battery had time to charge. So she called me to ask, "how long should I let the car run to make sure the battery is charged?"

I responded with, "what does your volt meter say?" She answered, "I don't think I have one of those." "Of course, you do," I said. "All cars have volt meters... sometimes they have a picture of a little battery on them and the needle will show how strong your battery is. Look at your gauges."

"I'm not seeing anything like that," she said. I couldn't believe she didn't have a volt meter in her car. So I went out to my vehicle – and sure enough, I don't have one either! Apparently, the car-makers decided some time ago that those were unnecessary now. But in the old days, all cars had volt meters. I guess I'm pretty old... Anyway, I told her to give it fifteen or twenty minutes, then drive home and the battery would be fine. And it was.

Just a silly story, but I was glad that in her time of need – even for something as simple as a dead car battery – she came to me for my advice and help. We have a close relationship and I'm blessed whenever any of my kids come to me, to share their difficulties as well as their joys and accomplishments. God wants to have that type of relationship with us, too. He's ready and waiting for us, but so often we neglect Him, and it never even occurs to us to go to God until we reach rock bottom.

You know, that's usually the point when people pray. Even Christians. They'll do and try everything else they can think of in their own power, and when all else fails, they'll say, "Well, all we can do now is pray." As if prayer is not only a last resort, but one that they really don't believe will accomplish much, if anything at all. But in Mark 11, Jesus told His disciples the importance of having faith in God. In verse 24, He told them, *"...whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

Paul told the Colossians to *“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it, with thanksgiving.”* Jeremiah 33:3, *“Call to Me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.”* And Psalm 145:18, *“The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”*

Now God doesn't promise to give us everything we ask for. But He does promise to give us everything we ask for that is in alignment with His will. He doesn't give us everything we want, but He absolutely does provide for us everything we need... because He knows far better than we do what's best for us, what we truly need in every situation. And He is there beside us, most especially when we go to Him in prayer.

I'm reminded of the song, *“What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”* An old hymn, from 1855, that talks about the importance of prayer. It goes like this: *“What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!*

“Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!”

The Scriptures tell us to pray without ceasing. This doesn't mean to spend the entirety of our lives doing nothing else but praying. But it does mean that we should pray and communicate with God all throughout every day and night of our lives. We should have a constant connection to the heart of God through our prayers. When you get that green light in busy traffic, just a quick *“thank you, Lord”* should be offered. When faced with an enormous *“to-do”* list of chores or work to be done, ask, *“Lord, please show me what I should do first, what's most important.”* And when you see a spiritually lost person on the street and pray, *“Lord, please show me how I can tell them about You,”* He will open that door of opportunity.

What a different world this would be if all who claim the name of Christ would pray without ceasing...praying from the heart as we commune with our Father in heaven, in Jesus' name. But today, even among Christians, prayer is not a priority. We may pray in church or before a meal, but these are often out of obligation or habit; and that doesn't make for a close relationship with God.

Corporate prayer is wonderful, when it is sincere and from the heart. But Jesus told us in Matthew 6 that it can also be vain when done with a wrong spirit. He said, *"...when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret...And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."*

If God already knows what we need before we ask, then what's the purpose of prayer? It's not a vain, religious ritual – it's building a relationship and a close bond with our Father, our Lord and Savior.

The "Lord's Prayer," found in Matthew 6, gives us an outline – a concept of how we should pray within the will of God. *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."*

So, we're to reverence God's hallowed name, pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth. We should thank Him for providing our daily sustenance, while asking His

forgiveness for our shortfalls, while remembering to forgive those who we might be holding a grudge against. We should ask Him to steer us clear from things the enemy might tempt us with, and keep us from evil things meant to harm us. And we should acknowledge that God, our Creator is the ruler of all things, with all power and glory.

This is a wonderful prayer, but it only touches on the basic concepts we should know and acknowledge when we talk to God. Unfortunately, in many churches and religious circles today, it's become just something we recite from memory, with no real understanding or sincerity behind it. God doesn't want us to speak to Him in meaningless words. He wants to commune with us, heart to heart. He wants us to have His heart within us, as we're transformed to His will through the renewing of our minds. And as Christ-followers and His ambassadors on this earth, we should always be growing closer to the image and heart of our Savior, through ever-growing sanctification and the continuous filling of our souls with His Holy Spirit.

I'm not real good at leading corporate, public prayer. People expect an eloquent speech, and a concise prayer that flows smoothly out of one's mouth. I have to tell you, that's not me. Of course, I do pray steadily throughout each day with short little comments to God. But in my extended prayer times, I will first speak, and then listen. Usually, I listen for a while – and this can frustrate people if I'm leading a group in prayer. They want something concise and to the point. Instead, I talk with God in prayer, and we converse. As we have our conversation together, God leads while I listen, and then I respond. And then I listen some more.

I believe that's how it should be. Because prayer is real. It's not a last resort thing to try when all else fails. It's communion with God Almighty and it should be heartfelt – a time to connect and bond with my heavenly Father. Indeed, it is that personal relationship that we hear so much about. That personal relationship is not just a concept. It's a real

thing, especially when you spend intentional, meaningful time together with God, and we do that through the wonder of prayer. Prayer changes things. It changes people, because through it, we draw ever closer to our Father. What a privilege it is – to carry everything to God – in prayer!

© 2023 Rob Pue – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Rob Pue: Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com