

Disciplines of the Christian life: Prayer – a seeking after God

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day!
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't take time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered, He answered, "You didn't ask!"

I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, "Why, child, you didn't knock!"

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me. He answered me, "But you didn't seek."

I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish, that I had to take time to pray.

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Jeremiah 33: 2 – 3 This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it—the Lord is his name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

1) Prayer is God initiated

- This is what the Lord says..."Call to me..."
- God wants us to come into his presence.
- As with everything else, God is the initiator of prayer.
- He doesn't only give a general call to prayer. He calls each one by name into his presence.
 - Moses was called by name into the presence of God at the burning bush. (Exodus 3: 4)
 - Samuel was called by name when he was a child. (1 Samuel 3: 1 – 10)
 - Isaiah said that we're engraved on the palms of God's hand. (Isaiah 49: 16)
- God also calls us a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession (1 Peter 2: 9)
 - As such he desires that we come close to him in prayer.
 - We recognise that it's a privilege and not a right to come close to him because he chose us, we didn't choose him, and he calls us into his presence.
 - He made us a royal priesthood to enter into the Most Holy place by his blood. We didn't make ourselves priests
 - We are a holy people made holy by the blood of Jesus. We couldn't make ourselves holy.
 - We are his special possession. We belong to him, but although he owns all things we are special to him. He desires that his special people enter into fellowship with himself.
 - Prayer isn't a call in the way of drafting people into the army. It's more of an invitation to enter the presence of God to find mercy, to hear his heart, to bring our requests and petitions before him, to be filled with awe of his glory as Moses was.
- The question is whether we will heed his call to come to him.
- We live in days of abounding religious profession. There are more places of public worship than there ever was before. There are more people attending them than there ever was before. And yet in spite of all this public religion, I believe there is a vast neglect of private prayer. It is one of those private transactions between God and our souls which no eye sees, and therefore one which people are tempted to pass over and leave undone. (J. C Ryle)

2) Prayer is God focused

- Call to me
- We are not told to call on anyone but the Lord.
- Which Lord is being referred to here?
 - The Lord is his name. This isn't Lord in the general sense of any god that is called lord in their respective religions. The Hebrew for Lord here is Yahweh, the God of the covenant.
 - When we call on the name of God it is the Lord Yahweh, the God of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who we're calling on.
 - It is Yahweh who became flesh and his new covenant name that we call on is Jesus.
- When we pray, we now focus on God in Jesus name.
 - John 14: 13 – 14 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.
 - John 15: 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit —fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.
- Not only are our prayers focused on God, who is able to answer any one of them.
 - After all he is the Lord who made the earth, formed and established it.
 - Nothing is beyond his ability.

3) Prayer is God answered

- ... I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'
- God answers prayer when we call on him.
- The first prayer of calling on him ought to be for salvation
 - Romans 10: 12 – 13 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile —the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
- God answers when we call on him in our distress
 - Psalm 91: 14 – 16 Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.
- God knows what we will ask for before we even ask for it
 - Isaiah 65: 24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.
- Although God is able to answer all prayers he only answers those that are prayed according to his will
 - 1 John 5: 14- 15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.
- God doesn't answer prayers if they are with the wrong motives
 - James 4: 2 – 3 You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.