

The Joy of Praying with Your Whole Heart

Of all the pastimes, prayer has to be one of the most rewarding and joyful in which one can engage.

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Zacharias was performing his priestly function. He was doing his job, and there appeared an angel unto him.

Luke 1:12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

The angel gave a message of comfort, "your prayer had been heard." And not only heard but God was actively doing something about it.

His prayer wasn't stuck in a committee, or God said "I'll get back to you." But his prayer was heard, and answered. He was going to have a son! God even sends a messenger, His angel, to tell him that his prayer had been answered. Joy was a result of Zacharias' prayer.

Acts 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Cornelius prayed. He received an answer. Not every time you pray God is going to send an angel to inform you that God has heard your prayer, but God does answer prayer. He did so then and He does so now. Cornelius' full answer came by way of another man who prayed, Peter.

Acts 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

God's Word doesn't say exactly why or what he prayed for; just that he went to pray.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

Cornelius did exactly what the angel had told him to do. Peter after talking with them, follows them to the household of Cornelius.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

All Cornelius wanted to hear was what God had to say. Peter led Cornelius' household into the new birth. This was the first time that Gentiles were born again of God's Spirit. That was quite an answer to prayer.

Prayer can be done between an individual and God.

Matthew 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest [talks with God], enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Jesus instructs his followers to not say the same prayer over and over again. He is teaching them the heart of prayer. Pray with believing, with conviction, knowing that your God and Father wants to answer your prayers and meet your needs.

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Cast your care upon him; [*merimna*]. Cast your cares, your anxiety, your mental distractions, your personal and family discomforts on Him, because He wants to do something about them.

I John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

We know that he hears us, and that if we ask anything according to His will, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

God is the fountain of life, and if we're tapped into Him, we have all the supply that God has made available.

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

We have a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God.

One reason many people are not having their prayers answered is that they suffer from broken fellowship, sin. Confess your broken fellowship and get back in alignment and harmony with Him.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Another reason our prayers are not getting answered is that Christians are in condemnation because of their failure to walk on God's Word.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...

The believer is to allow no condemnation into his life because he has been delivered from all condemnation by the completed work of Christ.

A third reason prayer is not answered is that they God's saints don't think that they are worthy enough to receive His blessings.

Well, we're not! We deserve the sentence of death that was ours when we got born into this world in the first place; BUT because of God's grace we are saved.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

We have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings through Christ, so we might as well learn what they are and take advantage of them.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ

If you want the will of the Lord; if you want God in your life, you have to stay put where God meets need, and that is in your prayer life. You can't expect God to be walking hand in hand with you if you do not spend any time in prayer.

Mark 11:21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Answered prayer is depended upon the heart of a person. The Christian is to have no doubt that leads to fear in his heart. This stops the prayer from being answered.

Jesus Christ was very specific. He said believe, and absolutely have no doubt in your heart, then it shall come to pass. Doubt and fear stop you from acting on the promises of God.

The word "heart" is used figuratively in the Bible as "the innermost part of the mind" of a person. The heart is the seat of one's personal life. Out of the heart come the real issues of life.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

The real desires and ambitions of a man or woman come from their heart. Believing emanates from the heart, the innermost part of the mind. Thoughts come from the top of the mind.

We are to believe with all our heart, in our innermost part of our minds, to receive the promises of God, including salvation. We stop believing when we allow doubt to penetrate into the heart. If we want to achieve results, we must believe from the heart.

If we believe, we may hesitate in our minds momentarily, but as long as that hesitation does not enter our hearts and become doubt, we are still believing. We will take the necessary action. However, we do not "follow our heart." It is not a reliable guide.

Proverbs 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

The heart of man cannot be trusted. One who listens to his own heart will be deceived.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

All of mankind has a serious heart problem.

Jeremiah 5:23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain...

These people would mouth what was right, but they didn't truly believe it in their heart to act on it.

Matthew 15:10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

If the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, how can it be a reliable guide? Without proper preparation our hearts will remain wicked and in opposition to God.

A man has many purposes, thoughts, imaginations, and reasonings in his heart. It is hard to figure out your own way; but the Lord through His wonderful counsel can direct your steps. We get the counsel of the Lord and His direction through His Word.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

We need the Lord to direct our steps through His revealed Word.

Proverbs 19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

We get the counsel of the Lord first from the written Word, then secondly in specific situations by revelation. The one great work of the Spirit is to direct the heart.

The type of heart God desires is found in Deuteronomy. It also lists the blessings that follow.

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

God wants a heart in His people that would reverence Him and keep His Word always; then they would be well and their children also.

How does man get such a heart? He has to prepare the soil of his heart to receive God's Word, then act on God's commandments.

I Chronicles 22:19a Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God

Jeremiah 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

God wants us to seek Him with our whole heart.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah shows that God's Word will absolutely accomplish what He pleases and will prosper where He sends it; just like certain elements on the earth produce food when certain conditions are met. An individual must seek the Lord and forsake his own ways and thoughts, then he will flourish. Man is responsible to prepare his heart to seek the Lord.

II Chronicles 12:14 And he [Rehoboam] did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

II Chronicles 19:3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee [Jehoshaphat], in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

David said in Psalm 57:7 My heart is fixed [prepared], O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

The preparation of the heart is not something that man does apart from God. We need God's help in preparing our hearts.

Psalm 10:17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

I Chronicles 29:18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

God will help us with the preparation of our hearts, but He holds us accountable to put His Word in our hearts and minds.

Deuteronomy 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Psalm 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Our hearts must not only be prepared to receive God's Word but also to do it.

Psalms 119:112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

We are in control of our hearts. So take control!

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

We decide whether we will allow our heart to be troubled and fearful, or whether we will trust in God and allow His peace to dwell in us richly.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

We need God's help so that our hearts can be united rather than divided. Then we can get answers to pray.

Psalm 86:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

How are you preparing the soil of your heart to seek the Lord God and to do His Word?