

Lesson 28: PREVAILING PRAYER

I Appointed You That Ye Should Go and Bear Fruit, and That Your Fruit Should Abide: That Whatsoever Ye Shall Ask of the Father in My Name, He May Give It You - John 15:16

Think about it: why do you pray? Why does God answer prayer?

I. Introduction

- a. In the first verse of our parable, Christ revealed Himself as the true Vine, and the Father as the Husbandman. For the next fifteen verses He elaborates on **abiding** and fruit bearing.
- b. Here, in the closing verse, He sums up all His teaching concerning Himself and the Father in the twofold purpose for which He had chosen the disciples.
- c. With reference to **Himself**, the Vine, His purpose in choosing is, that believers should bear fruit.
- d. With reference to the **Father**, His purpose is, that whatsoever believers should ask in His name, should be done by the Father in Heaven.
- e. As fruit is the great proof of the true relation to Christ, so prayer denotes our **relation** to the Father.
- f. A fruitful abiding in the Son, and prevailing prayer to the Father, are the two great **challenges** in the authentic Christian life.
- g. As we have seen in all the previous lessons on this parable, it is not on our merit, power or inclination that results are obtained. Rather, it is the operation of Christ. He is the **doer**.
- h. So too, shall we see in this verse that it is again Christ that provides the **grounds** for prevailing prayer and it is Christ that provides the guarantee for the answer.

II. The Grounds of Prevailing Prayer

- a. The closing words of the parable of the Vine reveal a tremendous truth; the truth of **prevailing** prayer. That is, prayer which accomplishes its intention. *That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*-
- b. The whole mystery of the Vine and its branches leads us up to the conclusion that the abiding believer; the one who **is** abiding in Christ and He in him; shall have his prayer answered by the Father.
- c. Answered prayer flows out of our relationship to Christ, what He has done on our behalf. Therefore, the first thing that we must understand is that Christ provides **ACCESS**.
- d. Access means "a leading to or toward," or, "approach to God's throne". Being granted access to the throne necessarily **precedes** an audience with God in prayer.
- e. Without the access that Christ provides we have no **acceptable** way to approach the Father and we would have none of His favor. *Ps 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. KJV*
- f. In substance, access is not different from the idea of "**peace with God**," i.e., the peaceful relation of God toward believers, brought about through Christ's reconciling death.
- g. That Christ is our access is shown **conclusively**:
 1. Jesus said, "I am **the way**" John 14:6.
 2. His **blood** is the "new and living way" Heb 10:20.
 3. Only through His **merit** do we have "access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" Rom 5:2
 4. "Through him we both have access by one **Spirit** unto the Father" Eph 2:18
 5. "in whom we have access in confidence, through our **faith** in him" Eph 3:12.
- h. The whole process of approach to, and abiding fellowship with God is **summed** up in this brief sentence Access to the Father, through Christ, by the Spirit, by faith.

III. The Guarantee

- a. The guarantee side of this passage rests on the following premise: That we ask **in His name**. Asking in the name of Jesus is not merely an appendage that we tack on at the conclusion of a prayer request. *Ye Shall Ask of the Father in My Name, He May Give It You*
- b. It is in the name of Jesus that we have access and in the spiritual realm that declaration establishes the **authority** for the request to be made in the first place. This is no small thing!
- c. In prevailing prayer, it is as if the requestor is presenting a signed **power of attorney** from Christ Himself that this is what He personally and specifically desires to have accomplished in the matter at hand.
- d. When we pray in the name of Jesus we are acting as the **agent** of Christ. We represent that this is what Christ has sent us, on His behalf, to request from the throne of the Father.
- e. Such prayer does not ask in consideration for our **own benefit**. This prayer is exclusively reserved for the glory and benefit of God. *Isaiah 42:8. "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another."*
- f. From this, it should be crystal clear that prevailing prayer involves asking according to **His will**. The Apostle John makes this point in 1 John 5:14-15. "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

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- g. We should also be quite clear that such certainty that we are praying in accordance with the will of Christ can **only** be had if we are truly abiding in Him and He is truly abiding in us.
- h. Since Christ wills what the Father wills, when the Spirit **communicates** to us what His will is we may pray on His behalf for its accomplishment. This is the prevailing prayer of one who is abiding. Rom 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. KJV
- i. However, even the most used of God saints in both the Old and the New Testaments occasionally **failed** to ask according to the will of the Father, what they were asking for was their own will to be done.
- j. This is not to say that such prayers are wrong, ill-conceived or out of place. We are instructed to make every concern a matter of prayer. However, prayer that is not “prevailing prayer” is **not guaranteed**.
- k. At such times when prayer is seemingly unanswered, what we can know from this is that these types of prayers are **not**, by definition considered prevailing prayer.

IV. When Prayer Fails

- a. Often, when believers experience a lack of power in their prayer it can be traced back to one or more **misconceptions** they have about the topic of prayer.
- b. This whole branch-life passage provides clear insight into one specific **aspect** of this problem. In this case, unanswered prayer is attributable to the lack of living the true abiding branch life.
- c. The **error** here is that these fail to lose themselves in the Vine. They fail to abide in Him entirely and yet still expect that God owes an answer to their earnest pleas.
- d. Failing to abide in Him leaves the believer stuck in his **own** interests, praying according to his own will and is guaranteed nothing from the throne of God.
- e. Therefore, the prayer-life of such a one will have nothing to do with **God’s will** or interest, but only that of the self of the petitioner.
- f. The assurance that we have is that abiding in Christ will have the effect of **revealing** to us what the Lord’s interests are in a particular circumstance. Hence, we ask according to His will and purpose.
- g. When prayer goes unanswered, the problem is not that God isn’t hearing or that He can’t help; but that **we miss the mark** as to how we ought to be praying in a particular circumstance.
- h. Sometimes the issue we face in prayer is not so much about getting answers as about gaining **perspective**. Prayer is about receiving a new perspective—the perspective of God.
- i. What we learn when we fail to get what we desire is that **in spite** of our disappointment, God is still on His throne and that He is still walking with us on the path of our lives. *2 Corinthians 12:8 “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*
- j. Some can get hung up on method, worried that they haven’t said the right words, haven’t prayed hard or often enough, or haven’t **believed** deeply enough. That’s hocus-pocus, not prayer *Matt 6:7-8 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. KJV*
- k. Another misunderstanding about prayer is that it can provide **absolute** protection from harm. God does protect us. But we ask amiss when we think that prayer provides a bubble of protection from any and all harm.
- l. Most of the original 12 disciples experienced persecution and even death by tortuous means. Sometimes God delivers us from harm, but sometimes he does not. We cannot **expect** a guaranteed deliverance.
- m. God does not exempt us from suffering. Prayer does not give us immunity. As we pray through our suffering, God changes our perspective. That is what glorifies God, we see **as He sees**.
- n. The Bible teaches us that prayer is a conversation with a living God who cares for us deeply, who loves us unconditionally, and who will never leave us nor **forsake us**.
- o. Prayer is often not so much about getting answers, as it is about experiencing an authentic relationship with God and learning to **trust him** and experience his presence in the midst of whatever happens in our lives.
- p. The lesson we ought to learn is that whether our prayer prevails or not, it is the abiding **relationship** with our Lord that we seek and that will sustain us through whatever trial or affliction we may face. This is abiding.

V. Application

- a. Think about it: What percentage of the time is your prayer for your benefit as opposed to that prayer which only concerns itself with the interest of God?