

# The Practice of Righteousness: Giving, Prayer and Fasting

## Doug Hamilton

### B) Prayer (Part I)

Continuing on Jesus' dissertation on "practicing righteousness", we move to the topic of prayer. Nobody who ever walked on earth knew more about prayer than Jesus Christ. His prayer to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane revealed a supplication so deep that sweat poured from His face like blood (Luke 22:44). Chapter 17 of John is actually a detailed prayer to God for Himself, His disciples and the believers to come in the future. It is estimated that the last week of Jesus' life before the crucifixion was dominated with prayer to God. Jesus was the greatest example of prayer we could ever have.

In Luke chapter 11:1 it says, "*It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."* He would go on to teach what we often referred to in Christian circles as the "*Lord's Prayer*". From this we will turn our focus over to Matthew chapter 6:5-15. He will deal with three items of prayer: 1) The Problems of Prayer, 2) The Pattern of Prayer and 3) The Precaution of Prayer.

#### 1) The Problems of Prayer

Matthew 6:5-8 "And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. <sup>7</sup> "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> "Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

There are two major problems of prayer according to Jesus, praying to impress men and praying to impress God.

##### a) Praying to Impress Men

In Jesus' day, there were two market days that all the country folks and visitors would come in from the outskirts to do their shopping. It was also during those busy times that the Jews had daily calls for public prayer. It was convenient that the Pharisees had a tendency to walk out of the synagogue and be standing at the busiest corners of the markets at the exact time the calls for prayer would take place. They would begin to pray aloud for all the people to admire their "great faith" in the words that rolled off their tongue. In this way they were praying to be seen of men. To avoid this Jesus said they need to spend more time praying alone at the homes.

##### b) Praying to Impress God

The gentile converts had a carryover practice from their heathen days of praying repetitious chants to God in an attempt to be granted favor. They felt if they prayed the same words loud enough and frequent enough, that God would hear them. They needed to understand that God knew what they had need of before even asking.

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### Application:

Strive to avoid having problems in our prayer lives. Seek to spend time alone with God every day. Always keep in mind that God knows what our needs are before we even address it in prayer. We are not bringing news to Him, but can have comfort that He is in control.

### 2) The Pattern of Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. <sup>10</sup> 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> 'Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.'

The Pattern is divided into four primary parts: The Preparation, the Program, the Provision and the Purpose. Naturally we will cover them in that order.

#### a) The Preparation

- i. He is Father. We must address the communal relationship that God has with us. He is "Father". That means we are His children. That is the relationship He desires of each and everyone of us.
  - *John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name"*
  - *1 John 3:1, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are..."*
- ii. He is Heavenly. We must address God our Father of possessing a heavenly perspective. He is not rattled by the things of this earth. His eyes are not hindered from seeing all that we do. He has a heavenly perspective.
  - *Proverbs 5:21, "For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths."*
  - *Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."*
- iii. He is Hallowed. This term means that God is set apart, special and sanctified. He deserves the first place in our priority list. We fully recognize Him as the center of our universe before we can have the proper preparation in our prayer.
  - *Revelation 4:8, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."*
  - *Psalm 99:5, "Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He."*

To hallow His name is to recognize God's intrinsic qualities. If we just look at some of names of God from the Old Testament, then we will see those abilities come alive in our hearts and minds. Here are just a few of them and how we can use them to hallow His name in prayer.

- ELOHIM -the Almighty God who keeps His promises. *"Lord, I know You are the great keeper of promises to Your people."*

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- EL -authority, strength and majesty. *“God, You are the one with all the strength and majesty of the universe.”*
- EL-ROI -the God who sees thee. *“Father, I want to acknowledge that nobody is hidden from your sight because You are the all-seeing God.”*
- EL SHADDAI -the Lord who supplies, nourishes, and satisfies. *“Lord, You are the One who provides for our needs. You are the One Who nourishes us in our moment of weakness.”*
- ADONAI -Master or Lord. *“God, I fully recognize you as my Master. You are the Master and I am the slave.”*
- JEHOVAH -the self-existent one. *“Lord, You answer to nobody because You have always been. You are the Great I AM.”*
- JEHOVAH-JIREH -the Lord will provide. *“Lord, I might not know where the next meal is coming from or how the next bill will be paid, but I know You will provide.”*
- JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU -the Lord is righteousness. *“Lord, You are always right am I am wrong.”*
- JEHOVAH-KADDESH -the Lord who sanctifies. *“God, You are so special that You can make me special. You are the One Who sanctifies.”*
- JEHOVAH-SHALOM -the Lord is peace. *“Lord, this is a crazy chaotic world I live in, but You are my peace. You are able to bring calm in the storm.”*
- JEHOVAH-ROHI -the Lord is my Shepherd. *“God, I fully recognize you as my Shepherd. You are my leader and I will follow You.”*
- JEHOVAH-NISSI -the Lord is my banner. *“God, You are One to Who I shall be bold to display my trust in You. You are my banner.”*
- JEHOVAH-ROPHE -the Lord heals. *“Father, I acknowledge that You are the One Who is able to heal me from all which plagues this body of humble state. You are the One that cause medicine, medical strategies and doctors to work. You are the Great Physician!”*
- JEHOVAH-KANNA -the Lord is jealous. *“Lord, You are a jealous God and want to be the center of my life. You do not want me to put anyone or anything ahead of You.”*

I am in no way saying that one has to know the Hebrew and Greek to hallow God’s name, but we must know the qualities of He possesses. We do need to know His qualities through a study of His word. It is not in the length of the hallowing, but in the understanding and appreciation of what was learned about God in the word. As Martin Luther once said *“The fewer the words, the better the prayer. To have prayed well is to have studied well.”* God does not want the quantity, but the quality. We must seek to hallow the name of our Father in our prayers.

The same applies in communicating reverence for His Son Jesus. The scripture states in *Phil 2:9-11* *Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* By hallowing the Son in Whom God is “well-pleased” (Mark 1:11) we can continue this hallowing God. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father (John 14:9). Here are some of His names and qualities. *“God, I recognize Your Son Jesus as...”*

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- Advocate (1 John 2:1)
- Almighty (Rev. 1:8; Mt. 28:18)
- Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)
- Amen of God (Rev. 3:14)
- Apostle of our Confession (Heb. 3:1)
- Atoning Sacrifice for our Sins (1 John 2:2)
- Author of Life, our Faith and our Salvation (Acts 3:15; Heb. 12:2, 2:10)
- Blessed and Only Ruler (1 Tim. 6:15)
- Bread of God and the Bread of Life (John 6:33)
- Capstone, Chief Cornerstone and the Living Stone (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-7; Eph. 2:20)
- Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)
- Creator and Deliverer (John 1:3; Rom. 11:26)
- Eternal Life and the Living One (1 John 1:2; Rev. 1:18)
- Faithful and True Witness, the Firstborn from the Dead (Rev. 1:5, 3:14, 19:11)
- Good Shepherd and Great Shepherd (John 10:11,14; Heb. 4:4, 13:20)
- Head of the Church and Heir of all Things (Eph. 1:22; Heb. 1:2)
- Holy One (Acts 3:14)
- Hope of Glory (Col. 1:27)
- Horn of Salvation (Luke 1:69)
- Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4)
- King Eternal, of Israel, of the Jews, of kings and of the Ages (1 Tim. 1:17; John 1:49; Mt. 27:11; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 15:3)
- Lamb of God without Blemish and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:5)
- Lord of All, Lord of Glory and Lord of Lords (Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 2:8; Rev. 19:16)
- Man from Heaven and our Mediator (1 Cor. 15:48; Heb. 9:15)
- Mighty God (Isa. 9:6)
- Bright and Morning Star and Light of the World (Rev. 22:16; John 8:12)
- Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:18)
- Our Great God and Savior (Titus 2:13)
- Our Holiness (1 Cor. 1:30)
- Our Husband, Protection and Redemption (2 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:30)

When begin our prayer with great preparation unto God, then the rest of our efforts will flow much easier. It is necessary to point out that the worldly man usually prays “Dear God, I have this need.” According to the pattern, our need doesn’t come first. By placing our “big” need on the backdrop of a truly awesome, wonderful and powerful Father, it becomes a very tiny request.

## Application:

In part two of this topic we will cover the rest of the Pattern and the Precaution of Prayer, but it is important to close with this application. Make it a point to begin your prayers with a prepared heart. Spend about ten minutes or more in each prayer recognizing God as Father, holding the perspective that He is in heaven and hallowing His name until we can feel His awesome presence. Together let us be more prepared as a prayerful people of God.