

Prayer As An Act Of Worship

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Introduction:

Worship is the state of rendering freewill obeisance, respectful obedience and loyal adoration to an object or entity, namely God. In the Lord's Supper we dine with the Lord. In teaching and singing, we correspond with God and with one another simultaneously. Prayer is the prime way we communicate with God directly while reading His word in the Bible is the way He reciprocates. ***Prayer is an avenue of worship, it is to converse with God not in meditation or wishful thinking but in direct address to Him, thanking Him for who He is and/or beseeching Him to grant a request or supplication.*** Prayers offered to God are to be a part of our public worship as well as our private daily devotions. Prayer itself is a blessing in that individually and collectively, we get an opportunity to appreciate our Creator and ask for the help of the omnipotent God. Prayer is something that is done by righteous Christians to God, through Christ, according to God's word.

Origin And Progression Of Prayer

Genesis 4:26 *And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.*

Prayer could be mental (1 Sam 1:12-13) or oral (Lk 11:1-2ff), with the verbal encouraged in the NT -Mt 7:7. ***Our lesson's focus is public and corporate or collective prayer.*** God commands us to pray always because He is in the business of answering prayers. He gives us the privilege of partaking in the actualization of His will (decretive, preceptive or permissive). He is not surprised by our prayers because He knows our needs -Mt 6:6-8. God's heaven is scented with our prayers -Rev 5:8b and we should always rejoice that we serve the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, the omnipotent God -Rev 19:6

Since we are told to spend much time in prayer, we cannot be careless and must strive to pray only as the Lord would have us to pray. The so-called Lord's Prayer is actually a model or pattern prayer for His disciples in all ages. Interestingly, many prefer to repeat the inspired prayers of David especially in times of trouble, such as Ps 23, 46, 91, 121, etc. Samples of Jesus' personal prayers are given in Mt 26, Jn. 17, etc. As the only begotten Son, Jesus could say 'My Father'. We are to address God as 'Our Father.' God is the Father of mankind, including both the physical race of men through Adam, as well as the new spiritual race of men who are born again through Jesus Christ. God is man's Father because He created him, sustains him, and provides all that man needs. In this petition, God's Fatherhood is presented on a higher level, namely that of the new birth" Apart from generally being "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29), Christians are His special or spiritual children who may say, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6). We note that:

- There are more private than corporate prayers in NT because disciples need to fast and pray more now that Jesus is not physically around -Lk 5:33-34.
- Prayer is a regular and effectual activity for righteous men (Jms 5:16b), watchful preachers (Eph 1:16, Col 4:12), widows indeed (1 Tim 5:5, Lk 2:36-37) and a church alive to its responsibilities (Acts 12:12, 1 Thess 5:25).
- **Acts 2:42:** "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" This verse about the first converts and the birth of the church show the acts of true worship for saints in the New Testament. Church needs to pray with thanksgiving -Phil 4:6, Col 4:2, 1 Thess 5:17. God always answered the church's prayer -Acts 4:31; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23. The church must learn the will of God by studying the Scriptures, offering up prayers which are in accordance with the divine will. Christ left us an excellent

example of praying according to the will of the Father (Luke 22:42). Even in hardships and times of great despair, we must realize that the will of God is working in the lives of His people to accomplish His purpose, as stated in Romans 8:28

Attributes of acceptable prayer in worship

- Jesus Christ is our mediator and high priest. Therefore, our prayers must be addressed to God in the name of Jesus -John 16:23; Col 3:17, 1 Tim 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2.
- Faithful men should lead public prayers of the saints (1 Tim 2:8) yet **we pray** NOT 'I pray', this is to encourage holiness and show respect to God (1 Cor 5), for headship or hierarchy (Eph 5:23, 1 Tim 3:4-5, 1 Cor 11:3 and 1 Pet 3:7), for orderliness and decency (1 Cor 14:33-35,40), to teach others by precept and example (2 Tim 2:2)
- In faith or with believe, without doubt, grudge or wrath -Mk 11:24-25, James 1:6-8
- It must be audible and intelligible or understandable not mumbled, jumbled or whispered -1 Cor 14:15-19
- NOT for show off to impress others, not in open space or blaring loud-speakers directed to public -Mt 6:5-6, vain repetition, shouts or tantrums -you don't speak to your Father anyhow - Mt 6:7
- Posture should be respectable and is not fixated: e.g. stand -Mk 11:25, prostrate -Mk 14:35, kneel -Acts 21:5
- Attire should be modest and decent with the man's head uncovered and the woman's own covered -1 Cor 11:1-16

Who To Pray For

We should pray for **others** and not just **ourselves** only; this is a great way of bearing others burden spiritually. We are to pray for **rulers** (1 Tim 2:1-2), our **enemies** (Mt 5:44), **labourers** for the kingdom (Mt 9:38), all **saints** (Eph 6:18-20). Christ did all these giving us a perfect example, he even prayed for you and I in Jn 17:20!

What To Pray For

- Acknowledgement of God's rulership with thanksgiving -Mt 6:9
- Our daily basic needs -Mt 6:11, Heb 13:7
- Forgiveness of our sins --Mt 6:11, I Jn 1:6-8
- Our desires -Ps 37:5-6, Mk. 11:14
- Salvation of others -Rm 10:1 & 1 Tim 2:3-4
- God's kingdom -Mt 6:11, 2 Tim 4:1,18
- Peace of our land -1 Tim. 2:2b

More Things Prayer Does:

- allows our requests to be made known unto God -Phil 4:6
- is fellowship with God, children conversing with their heavenly Father - I Jn 3:22
- is an expression of one accord for the congregation -Acts 1:14
- sanctifies -I Tim 4:5
- saves the sick and ensures forgiveness when accompanied by repentance (Act 8:22-24 & Jms 5:15)
- help deliver us from temptation -Lk 22:40
- helps others when we interceed -II Cor 1:11a
- opens doors -Mt 7:7

The Ways God Answer Prayers

Yes -Abraham's plea for Sodom & Gomorah -Gen 18:22, Hannah's request for children -1 Sam 1:10-20, Christ's prayer concerning His crucifixion -Mt 26:39-42 & Heb 5:7, Stephen's prayer for his killers - Acts 7-8, Corlenius' prayer for a proper relationship with God -Acts 10:31.

No -Moses' request to enter the promise land -Deut 31:51-52, David's request to build the temple -1 Chro 28:2-3, Paul's request for removal of the thorn in his flesh -2 Cor 12:8-9

Wait: Daniel's request for end to Israel's captivity -Dan 9 and Prince of Persia's delay to answered prayer -Dan 10:3,11-14, Israel's and Simeon's prayer for the Redeemer -Lk 2:25-31

He Now Employs Providence Not Miracles

Though God no longer use men to perform miracles to grant requests as he has ceased his special revelation, the revealed Bible teaches that God still answers requests according to His will using providential means -Heb 1:2-3, Rm 8:28. Prayer is one of the Christians battle gear in resisting the wiles of the Devil -Eph 6:18. Satan's influence can be expelled with prayer and fasting -Mk 9:29. We should not give up but continue to pray that God's will be done in our lives and land, that His kingdom increase and His name be glorified -Lk 13:1-3, Rm 12:12.

Conclusion

The church needs to pray with great reverence and respect, beseeching God for spiritual growth, for wisdom in understanding his will, for those who are lost or who have fallen away, for those with whom we are studying, for our elders, deacons, and ministers, for our own weaknesses, for our own forgiveness, for our daily needs and for the providence of God to use each of us as is best for the kingdom of Christ. More prayers are needed always; it's a quiet, non too-exacting way of serving others.

1 John 3:18-22 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1 John 5:13-15 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. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, *if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:* And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Hebrews 4:13-16 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Addendum: Can we direct prayer to Jesus?

Ans: Yes, it is implied in scripture when we realize that He is God – Heb 1:8-12, Jn 5:23; 14:13-14, Acts 1:24-25; 9:5, Ps 2:12, Acts 2:36; 7:59-60