

Prayer, a Gift from God

May 24, 2015

Today, I want to continue speaking on the subject of prayer. God places the desire within the hearts of men to communicate with his creator. We desire to worship and when we don't know the Lord, we worship idols. Many people reject the idea concerning worshipping idols being prevalent in a civilized society. However, the first of the 10 commandments given to Moses in Exodus 20:3 reads like this: You shall have no other gods before me. You are not to make carved images whose likeness is of anything that is in heaven or in earth or under the waters under the earth to worship nor bow to them nor serve them.

The Bible says that we cannot serve two masters. See Matthew 6:24. You will hate one and love the other or else you will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. The word mammon refers to wealth and riches as a false god. In Matthew 7:7-12, it tells us to ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, and when you knock it shall be opened unto you. It isn't just for a certain race or person for in verse 8 it says that everyone who asks receives and everyone who seeks will find and anyone who knocks, the door will open to him. It goes on to say that people will honor the requests made by a son to a parent. What person would give a stone to a son who is hungry and asks for bread? What person would give a son a serpent when he asks for some fish? If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets.

What should we pray for? First of all, a person who has not accepted Christ and asked for forgiveness for his sins and rebellion against God must confess his sins and forsake them. That is repentance. In the parable that Jesus told concerning prayer, he began by saying that men should always pray and not lose heart. See Luke 18:1. He then told a story of a certain city whose judge didn't fear God and he had no regard for man. In this city lived a widow who needed help and she went with a request asking the judge to get justice for her from her adversary. For a while, he did not act on her request. She persisted until finally he said within himself, "Though I don't fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Jesus declared that God will avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them. Jesus said that He will avenge them speedily. The next verse is a sobering one. It asks a question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Will He find faith in all of us who attend the Canaan Union Church? In the parable of the sower, some seeds were stolen by the birds, some seeds fell among stony ground and withered and died because the sun burned them, some fell among thorns, but others fell among good soil and produced some 30, some 60

and some 100 fold. What kind of heart do you have where the seed of the word of God is planted year after year, week after week, and day after day?

In Luke 18, it speaks about prayer and the proper way to approach our heavenly Father. Jesus told this story to those who had confidence in their own righteousness and who looked down on everyone else.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men- extortioners (obtaining something by illegal threats or force) unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess."

The tax collector stood some distance away and would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven but smote his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus compared the two in this manner: The man who repented went away justified as God accepted his prayer. The self-righteous man went away the same as he came, a sinner refusing to acknowledge his shortcomings who believed his good works saved him.

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

In James 5:10, we are instructed to take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patience. Those who endure are counted as blessed. Job has always been used as an example of patience and endurance in the face of very difficult circumstances. He didn't sin against God nor charge him foolishly though he didn't understand why all the troubles came his way. He said, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust him." We learn from reading the book of Job that God is very compassionate and merciful. James warned against swearing by heaven, or by earth or with any other oath, but let your "yes" be "yes" and your "Nay" be "Nay", lest you fall into judgment.

This is a warning against using God's name in a flippant manner to seal a contract. James gives some instruction to believers following these verses. Is there anyone among you who is suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone sick?

Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James used Old Testament prophets as examples of God answering prayer. Elijah was a man just like us and God heard his prayer concerning withholding rain on the land when the people practiced idol worship. It didn't rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heavens opened up and rain poured down on the parched ground and the earth once again produced fruit.

James says that we are to attempt to draw people back to the truth who stray and in doing so we will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sin. Let us continue to pray.