

Let us Pray

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John

6:37 Everything the Father gives me will come to me, and I'll never turn away the one who comes to me.

[International Standard Version]

1John

1:9 If we make it our habit to confess our sins, in his faithful righteousness he forgives us for those sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

A lot of people come to ask for my advice on various matters in their lives, but very often I can't give them easy solutions. The best answer I can give is; "why don't we pray?" When we pray, the Lord will never fail to answer, because He is alive. He does not ask us to pray only when we are in trouble, but to keep praying all the time. After all, "never stop praying" is not a suggestion from the Lord; rather, it is His command. Each local assembly has to be a gathering for prayers. It is the intention of the Lord. Nothing is more important than prayers. In addition, nothing is as indispensable as prayers.

Then, what is prayer after all? It means to come to Jesus.

Matthew

11:28 Come to me, all of you who are weary and loaded down with burdens, and I will give you rest.

Those who are not weary, those who are not loaded down with burdens won't feel like coming to Him. Thus, it is a blessing to suffer, to be distressed by various problems. Because if you ask for help, as a consequence you come to know your redeemer. Through true prayers, we are given a gift. It won't make us become hypocrites. "I will give you...." The Lord desires to give us. "Your Father God is willing to give you," so promised Jesus.

I guess most of us are believers in Jesus and are convinced of our salvation. Knowing that your sins are forgiven and your debts are canceled is the source of true joy. There may be some people among us who do not have this joy yet. However, it is necessary for all people to 'pray' and come to Jesus. Because Jesus is the one who forgives our sins. Furthermore, Jesus shows us the way to get out of any horrible situations.

Jesus is capable of fulfilling people's needs. Jesus is the one who would never disappoint anyone. Our prayers will be heard. However, I think that there are some conditions for our prayers to be heard. Let us find answers to three questions.

Firstly, what is the secret for prayers to be heard? Secondly, what does it mean to pray by the name of Jesus? Thirdly, what kind of people are able to pray by the name of Jesus? I would like to think about these three simple questions quickly. Let me read some verses from the Gospel according to John;

John

14:13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14:14 If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

15:7 If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you will receive it.

15:16 You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

16:23 ...Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, whatever you ask the Father for in my name, he will give it to you.

16:24 So far you haven't asked for anything in my name. Keep asking and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete."

16:26 At that time, you will make your requests in my name, so that I will have no need to ask the Father on your behalf,

Jesus made these promises to His disciples at the time. In actuality, while Jesus was alive, His disciples did not follow His words and thus they could not experience what Jesus promised. It was not until Pentecost that they realized "Jesus was telling the truth" and experienced repeatedly that "if they pray, it will absolutely be answered." Here, we see the limitless promise of prayers. "Seek and it will be given." This is what the Lord almighty offers to us. This wondrous promise encourages us to seek and ask for anything as much as we want.

What is the condition for prayers to be heard? The condition is in the words that appear six times in the verses quoted at the beginning; "in my name." It is also explained in other words, which are "if you abide in me." After all, the condition is that we are connected with Him. Then, what does it mean to pray in the name

of Jesus? It means that His name remains within the fellowship of the members.

It is to rely on Jesus. It is totally opposite to self-governance and self-determination. It also means to live inside the Lord and stay within the Lord. We need to understand correctly the meaning of praying in the name of Jesus. Because it is the secret for prayers to be heard.

Matthew

24:5 many will come in my name and say, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many people.

At the same time, we have to be careful about one other point; there are so many people who believe that they are praying toward the Father God in the name of Jesus, but they are actually misguided and deceiving themselves.

Needless to say, to pray in the name of Jesus does not mean to simply add the magic words "in the name of Jesus" as the last sentence of your prayers. Many people just care about themselves and after all, their prayers are nothing but the expression of their self-centered desires. Such prayers won't be heard even though they add the name of Jesus at the end of the sentence.

James

4:3 You ask for something but do not get it because you ask for it for the wrong reason—for your own pleasure.

'Reason' is important after all. What is important is not whether the key words "in the name of Jesus" are used; rather, it is a state of our mind. It is whether we are dominated by the sole desire for Jesus to be glorified above all else.

According to Chapter 4, Verse 14 of John, Jesus said that our prayer would be heard if "it is prayed for the Father to be glorified in the Son." The focus of our prayers should never be placed just on our wealth, our health, success, pleasure, or even on our service. Our true prayer should be intended toward the manifestation of the glory of Jesus alone. In actuality, only those who have experienced the strength that comes from the blood of Jesus are allowed to pray in the name of Jesus.

Christians are justified by the blood the Lord shed. They are redeemed and have obtained the forgiveness of their sins by the Blood Jesus shed. Some people say that they do believe in God but they do not need Jesus. However, prayers without Jesus are all

pointless. Here is the story of one such person, who was a very remarkable judge.

His wife, who was a believer in Jesus, went to see the famous evangelist called Moody and asked him to talk to her husband. However, knowing that discussion with him would be utterly meaningless, Moody rejected her request. Then, Moody began to pray for the judge.

After a while, the judge was led to Jesus and saved. It is important to be convinced of the power of prayers. That was what happened to this man. As a response to the prayers, the judge came to feel unease and anxiety in his heart. One day, while his wife was attending the prayer meeting, the anxiety in his heart began to grow and it grew tremendously. He tried to get some rest but he couldn't sleep all night.

Next day, he went to his office without taking breakfast. He laid off all his employees and shut down his office. Then, he began to pray. "God, please forgive my sins." However, his prayer sounded utterly worthless and empty. Finally, he became desperate and screamed loudly, "God, in the name of Jesus, please forgive me because of Jesus." Then suddenly, his heart was filled with peace.

This was how the judge was saved. Jesus is the only way to know the true living God. He is not a road sign. He is the way itself. It is only by virtue of the blood Jesus shed, that we are allowed to approach the true living God.

To pray in the name of Jesus means to come close to the true living God through the virtue of the blood He shed. To pray in the name of Jesus is very much like bringing a blank check (check with no amount stated) to the bank and getting money. For example, if I have my own account in Mitsubishi bank, the teller will cash the check for me. If the check is accompanied with my personal reference, anyone can cash the check. However, without my personal identification, even my children won't be able to get any money.

At the same time, if you do not have a bank account in Fuji Bank, you will never get anything from them. Prayer is very much like a blank check. The Lord says, "If there is anything you want, just write it down on this blank check and ask from me. Then, I will give you whatever you asked; however, I would give it to you only in my name."

If we refuse to live by relying on Jesus and are not connected with Him, it is like we have no bank account in heaven. Thus, our wishes will never be fulfilled and our prayers won't be heard. However, the ones of those who pray in the name of Jesus will be heard.

The richness of Jesus is limitless. So we are supposed to seek and ask Him as much as we want.

The Lord desires to give us as many things as He can. But, He can only do so as far as the name of Jesus is not blemished and all glory is ascribed to the Lord. Furthermore, only when we do not lose track of ourselves will the Lord listen to our prayers.

To pray in the name of the Lord is to wish to know the will of the Lord, and wish only the will of the Lord to be fulfilled. If you have an attitude like this, your prayers will absolutely be heard in any case. The Lord has a way prepared for each one of us. So it is important for us to realize, before we begin to pray, which is the path the Lord has prepared for us, that is to say, what the intention of the Lord is. If we know the intention of the Lord, we can pray freely and we will have a desperate desire for the name of the Lord to be praised.

1 John

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him: if we ask for anything according to his will, he listens to us.

Not only do we have this wish, but it is also the immovable confidence that we have. Let us be extremely careful about one thing. That is to say, to pray in the name Jesus is to understand the intention of the Lord. It is to pray based on that intention and make it our own intention too. Those who don't know the intention of the Lord will not be able to pray in the name of Jesus.

To pray in the name of Jesus is to ask and seek in the name of Jesus instead of your own. Many people make the mistake of becoming guarantors of others or accepting the use of their personal seal. They allow others to use their name and regret it later when they realize that they are deceived.

So, we should not give the right of using our name to someone we do not trust. One such example can be found in Gehazi, servant of the prophet Elisha. This man called Gehazi used the name of Elisha, not for the glory of the Lord to be revealed, but for himself to be rich. He only thought of himself.

He actually became rich but lost the blessing of the Lord. He was cursed and consequently, he contracted leprosy soon after.

Here, let us summarize what I have been talking about. To pray in the name of Jesus is to follow prayers that match the will of the Lord, relying upon the Holy Spirit.

And thus, to pray in the name of Jesus is to hope what the Lord hopes, to desire what the Lord desires and to have the same intention as the Holy Spirit, that is to say, always to seek nothing but the glory of Jesus (as the Holy Spirit does). The intention of the Lord has to be our sole desire. And it is only possible when we refuse to compromise but completely surrender ourselves to the Lord. If we have the right attitude, we can pray in the name of the Lord. After all, that is the condition for prayers (to be heard).

John

15:7 If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you will receive it.

This is such a wonderful promise, which is given not just to His disciples, but to us too, isn't it? This verse begins with 'if', which indicates that prayer is conditional. Let me read another verse. It actually means exactly the same.

1 John

3:22 Whatever we request we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

Brothers and sisters in early churches had this conviction. If we do what the Lord wants us to do, the Lord too will do what we want Him to do. Please listen to the voice of the Lord. Then, the Lord will listen to you too. Immeasurable amounts of wealth are offered to us.

However, there is one condition to receive it. It is to remain by the Lord and to pray in the name of Jesus. It is possible only when we are aware of the intention of the Lord. So, we (are supposed to) seek every day to know the intention of the Lord, desire of the Lord and inquiry from the Lord. We all know that the intention of the Lord is the best for us. We also know that the Lord always desires to bless us and He wants to use us.

Furthermore, we all know that when we follow our own intention, we cause harm to not only ourselves, but to other people too. If we refuse to seek the intention of the Lord, our life will be nothing but a tragedy. Why don't we stop pursuing our own interest but place ourselves under the control of the Lord?

Even if we don't get any answer to our prayers at all, we should not blame the Lord. We need to understand that it is because we are facing the Lord with the wrong mindset. When we do not get an answer to our prayers, it does not mean that the promise of the Lord does not deserve to be trusted; rather, it is because of

our unfaithfulness and disobedience. When we do not get an answer to our prayers, it should be considered as an unremitting invitation to repentance and sincere devotion to the Lord, who wants to give us the best.

I have said this a number of times. But I would say it as many times as I have to that we absolutely need to understand the intention of the Lord. But is it really possible? Answering this question, the Bible, which consists of the words of God, clearly says it is.

Philippians

2:5 Have the same attitude among yourselves that was also in the Messiah Jesus:

If it was not possible, Paul would never have written that...

1Corinthians

2:16 we have the mind of the Messiah.

This was what he wrote. Likewise, David, the author of Psalms wrote;

Psalms

25:14 The intimate counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him.

Most importantly, the Lord reveals His intention only when we sincerely want to know Him and are prepared to carry out His will. That is to say, for us, knowing the will of God and performing the will of the Lord can never be separated from each other. If someone considers that "I would first examine what God has in His mind before deciding whether I would obey His will", their life will end in ruin.

John

7:17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether this teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.

The words of God are clearly recorded in the Bible. All promises the Lord made in the Bible reflect His intention. For example, we may expect to be given wisdom in answer to our prayers. Because it was clearly promised (in the Bible).

James

1:5 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to everyone generously without a rebuke, and it will be given to him.

James must have experienced this repeatedly. If you sincerely hope to become a man of prayer and please the Lord, you should read His words in the Bible in order to understand what His intention is. We are

greatly encouraged by the fact that all believers are given the Holy Spirit. In addition, the Holy Spirit is given to help our prayer (life).

Romans

8:26 In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, since we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words,

8:27 and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will.

What a wonderful promise! What these words tell us is as follows; The Holy Spirit can lead us, when we don't know what we should pray about, when we are deprived of all hopes—it is a blessing for us. Those who refuse to pray have no excuse. Do not stop praying. This is a very clear instruction from the Lord.

It is not just that we have to pray — we are privileged to pray. It is because the Holy Spirit is given to us. Being a half-way Christian is absolutely meaningless. Unless you obey Jesus through your own intention, you have no value for both the Lord or people in general.

If you consider that committing a sin or two is not a big deal, the Lord won't use someone like you. The Lord will take away all joy from you, and you will not be able to bear any fruit. It is important for us, just like for Paul, to ask, "Lord, what should we do?" and then prepare yourself to perform the will of the Lord using His strength. Paul asked this question and he received a clear answer from the Lord. This answer, of course applies to us all.

Colossians

3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

3:13 Be tolerant of one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also should forgive.

3:14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which ties everything together in unity.

3:15 Let the peace of the Messiah also rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body, and be thankful.

3:16 Let the word of the Messiah inhabit you richly with wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts.

3:17 And whatever you do, whether by speech or action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Lord Jesus, whom we want to believe in, love and serve, was a man of prayer. Those who wish to pray in the name of Jesus have to understand the life of prayer. What was the most important thing for Jesus while he lived in this world? It was prayer. Still, for Jesus who resides in heaven today, the most important task is to pray, to intercede.

If prayer is not the most important factor of our life, we are in big trouble. We will be placed in the wrong situation. Jesus never ceased to pray. And He has been urging us to do the same — Don't stop praying.

End