

What Matters In the Light of Eternity:
“Prayer Matters”
Acts 2:42-47

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June 8, 2008

Big Ed went to church and listened to the preacher. When people were invited to come forward for prayer, Big Ed got in line. “What do you want me to pray about?” asked the preacher. “About my hearing,” answered Big Ed. So the preacher promptly put one finger in Big Ed’s ear, lays his hand on his head and prays fervently for Big Ed’s hearing to improve. After several minutes the preacher said, “Amen,” and asked Big Ed, “How’s your hearing?” “I don’t know,” replied Big Ed, “the hearing won’t be until next week at the Floyd County Court House.”

“We’ll hold you in our thoughts and prayers.” Thousands of people have said that to me and I am most grateful. I owe my livelihood to you, but how does prayer work and what are the right words to say? Jesus tried to tell us. We know His teaching as the Lord’s Prayer. Let us take a look at these instructions of Jesus.

PRAYER IS ADORATION.

“When you pray say, ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.’” When it comes to prayer God is more Abba, more Daddy, than Almighty. He is **our** Father, not my father and His name is not Howard as so many young people seem to believe. His nature is hallowed. To pray is to adore.

Father, we adore you and we lay our lives before you. Adoration is the yearning of the heart to worship, honor, magnify, and bless God. Ask for nothing but to cherish Him; seek nothing but His exaltation; focus on nothing but His goodness. Sometimes prayer needs words, but not many.

Some adoration is private. While I would not wish this illness on my worst enemy, there are lessons I have learned in this struggle that have enriched my soul and warmed my heart. In recent months, I have found it necessary to rest in the afternoons. Such stops in the middle of the day are against my nature, but my body dictates I need rest. As I crawl in bed I listen to a whole host of meditation hymns and gospel songs that soothe my soul and bless my heart. So, I am able to find my rest in God and you know these have been some of the most spiritually rewarding times of my life. Peace flows like a river. I

am assured that all is well with my soul. I bask in the knowledge that this is my Father's world.

Some adoration is public. Sometimes I wonder if we who worship all the time understand the meaning of worship. We have been so brain washed into believing that the leaders are the performers, and the congregation is the audience that we can't get away from it when we come to church. Church is different. Worship is a drama, but God is the audience; leaders are the prompters, and the congregation is the performers. If we ever embraced this concept it would change our whole attitude about worship. We are not here to please you; we are here to please God. The preacher is not on the line to perform well, but to help the congregation worship well. When will we learn to glorify God in church?

Maggie Ross said that if institutional churches are to halt their rapid decline, those who direct them must actively and intentionally return to adoration as their primary goal.

PRAYER IS ALIGNMENT OF WILLS. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

If your wheels are out of alignment on your car, you've got a problem. The car will not steer properly and you will wear out your tires before their time. Tires work better when they work together. The same is true for the will. When our wills are in union with God's will, life flows more smoothly.

There is a will of God. The will of God is not as hidden as we sometimes make it out to be. It is the will of God that the world will be saved. It is the will of God his kingdom will rule on earth as it does in heaven. It is the will of God that not one of his little ones should perish. It is the will of God for good to overcome evil. It is the will of God for justice to roll down like rivers and righteousness like a mighty stream. It is the will of God that you and I learn to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. It is the will of God that you and I hear the cry of the needy. It is the will of God that people be delivered from racism, sexism, nationalism, and consumerism. It is the will of God that whole communities come into gospel fidelity. Come to think of it, I know a lot more about the will of God than I am willing to follow.

Everything that happens on earth is not the will of God as it happens in heaven. That is why we need to pray. It's why we need to work against crime, abuse, greed, and all attitudes that destroy communities. It's why we need to work for the healing of diseases, the empowerment of the poor, the fair distribution of the world's goods and resources. That's why we need to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted us on earth. The kingdom of God on earth demands our deepest loyalty and unfailing commitment.

When our wills collide with the will of God, we do well to surrender. Nobody said surrender is easy. We beg, we pout, we demand. We expect God to perform like a

magician or shower us with blessings like Father Christmas. We want instant solutions and resort to manipulative prayers, but the end of prayer is not to win concessions from Almighty Power, but to have communion with Almighty Love.

PRAYER IS ASKING.

“Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Because we have physical needs, we are invited to ask. Jesus put it boldly when He said, “*Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you.*” Boldly we approach the throne of God to make our needs known and God welcomes these requests. “Morning by morning new mercies I see.”

Our requests presents the problem of unanswered prayer. Moses prays to enter the Promised Land but dies on Mt. Nebo. Paul prays three times for the thorn in the flesh to be removed, but God replies, “*My grace is sufficient for my power is made perfect in weakness.*”

As C.S. Lewis writes, “Every war, every famine, almost every death bed is a monument to a petition that was not granted.” Why are some prayers not answered the way we wish? We are manipulative in asking, expecting God to twist another’s will when we can’t do it ourselves. We don’t know what we really need. If God had granted all the silly prayers I’ve made in my life, where would I be now?

We don’t have the patience to wait. Some things take time. Some things take a lot of time. It takes more than one life-time for God’s will to be done. When I die of cancer, let no one say our prayers went unanswered. Rejoice that I am just beginning to experience the full cure from pain’s debilitating days.

H.S. Fosdick said, “No good prayer ever comes weeping home. For either God changes the circumstances or he supplies sufficient power to overcome them.” Prayer changes things or prayer changes us. Either way it’s all right, even when things seem to be all wrong.

Because we have spiritual needs we need to make our requests known. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Bob and Judy Fisher in their book [Life is a Gift](#) discovered there is an urgency among hospice patients to forgive and be forgiven. The emotional burden of carrying a backpack full of unforgiven issues can get really heavy. It is a burden the soon departed are not usually willing to carry.

Martha is an example. She is dying of lung cancer. She had good reason to be bitter, but she chose to be forgiving. You see, her husband was an alcoholic and often abusive. He had an affair with a member of their own family. When he had a stroke, Martha cared for him for thirteen years until his death. Martha could have taken revenge on an abusive, unfaithful husband. Instead, she forgave him and the sister-in-law with whom he had an affair. As Martha said in her interview, "I no longer had the strength to hold grudges. I didn't want to waste the rest of my life on bitterness."

What's true of forgiveness is, likewise, true of temptation.

Ask the Savior to help you,
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you.
He is willing to aid you.
He will carry you through.

PRAYER MATTERS IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen.