

GOD

The Benefits of Prayer

God, our heavenly Father, **loves** us, and He wants the **best** for us. He is able and willing to take care of us and to supply our every need. So, **instead** of trying to “do it all ourselves”, we **trust in Him**. One way that we trust in God is by **praying**. As we **pray**, sharing our hearts with our heavenly Father, we express our recognition that **He**, not we ourselves, is our sufficiency.

We'll start in **Philippians, Chapter 4**, where we'll read **verses 6 and 7**.

Philippians

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

These two verses are packed with great truths about the importance of **prayer**. **Verse 6** begins by telling us **not to be anxious** about **anything**. God **knows** that we have needs and concerns, but **instead** of being filled with anxiety, God's desire for us is that we be **at peace**. It's been said, “The greatest cargoes in life come in over quiet seas.” “**Peace of God**” in verse 7 is a **figure of speech** (Genitive of Origin) meaning “peace which comes from **God**”, emphasizing **God** as the **giver** of this peace. We can have **perfect peace**.

Isaiah 26:3 tells us “Thou wilt keep *him* in **perfect peace**, *whose* mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”, or, more accurately: “Thou (God) wilt keep him in perfect peace, **whose mind is stayed because he trusteth in thee.**” As we **trust in God**, our minds are **stayed, established**, and God keeps us in **perfect peace**.

Philippians 4:7 tells us this **perfect peace**, which is beyond our comprehension, will keep, or **guard**, both our **hearts**, the innermost part of our personal lives, and our **minds**, our **thoughts**. The verse ends with “through (more accurately “**in**”) Christ Jesus.” As we trust in God and enjoy the perfect peace which He gives us, we can enjoy **fellowship with Him**.

The **key** to having this perfect peace and fellowship with our heavenly Father is contained in **verse 6**: rather than being anxious about anything, we make our requests known to God by “prayer and supplication with thanksgiving”. To fully appreciate the greatness of what this verse is telling us about trusting in God by praying, we'll **take a closer look**.

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

The word “**prayer**” in this verse is from the Greek word *proseuchē*, which more literally means prayer as “**a pouring out**” to God. When we **pray**, we are to “**pour out our hearts to God**”. Consider **Psalm 62** (we'll return to Philippians 4:6):

Psalms

62:1 Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation.

62:2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defense (*my high place*); I shall not be greatly moved.

62:5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him.

62:6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defense; I shall not be moved.

As we look to **God** for what we need, we are **firm**: we shall **not** be moved. Notice that this is said **twice**: it is **established**.

62:7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.

62:8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. *Selah (Consider these words)*.

We are to **trust in**, have **confidence in**, **God**. As we look to God, we trust in Him by **pouring out our hearts to Him**. Let's **return to Philippians 4:6**:

Philippians

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

We've seen that "**prayer**" in this verse is pouring out our hearts to God. "**Supplication**" is the word *deēsis*, defined as "a **petition** for something that we need." This word **also** occurs in **James 5:16**, which says "...**The effectual (*energized*) fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth (*prevails*) much.**" In that verse, the word "**prayer**" is this word *deēsis*. We can expect our energized **supplication** to God to **prevail**.

The word "**requests**" in **Philippians 4:6** is from the Greek word *aitēma*, which can be defined as "**a specific petition** for a particular thing". It's **another** word for **prayer**. We can gain some **additional** insight into this word *aitēma* from **Psalm 37**:

Psalms

37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; *so* shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

37:4 Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

37:5 Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring *it* to pass.

In the **Septuagint**, a Greek translation of the Hebrew text, the word "**desires**" in verse 4 is the word *aitēma*. As we **trust in God** and **delight in Him**, He shall **give** us the **desires** of our hearts, those things we petition Him for by **prayer**.

Verse 5 says we "**commit**" our ways to God: we trustingly **give it all to Him**. As we do, we no longer are burdened with those cares. **I Peter 5:7** says: "**Casting all your cares upon him, for he careth for you.**" When you pray, **give your cares to God** (**don't** take them back!).

Philippians

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

We saw that this verse contains **three** different Greek words for “**prayer**”. This is the **figure of speech “Synonym”** used here by God to emphasize the **importance** of prayer. Notice **also** that we are to pray with **thanksgiving**. Look at **I Thessalonians, Chapter 5**:

I Thessalonians

5:17 Pray without ceasing.

5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

It is God’s will, His **earnest desire**, that we “**give thanks**” in everything, **including** prayer. When we have the “**attitude of gratitude**” we are more open to **receiving** from God.

The **greatest example** of a **man** who prayed to God was our Lord and Savior **Jesus Christ**. We can see what **he** had to say about prayer in the Gospel of **Matthew, Chapter 6**, where we’ll begin in **verse 5**:

Matthew

6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets (*open places*), that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The word “**pray**” in this verse is from the Greek *proseuchomai*, to **pray to God**. Jesus Christ told his audience that when they **pray**, they are **not** to be like the hypocrites who make a **show** of how devout and religious they are. **Those** people “**have their reward**” – they **already** got **all** they are going to get for their “prayer”, which is to be seen by others. They **won’t** get any more because their heart is not right with God.

6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

At first glance, this verse **looks** like when we **pray**, we should go alone into a **closet** and close the door! A “**closet**” in Gospel times referred to a “**treasure storehouse**”, a secret chamber where **treasures** were stored. Not everyone had a room specifically set aside to store their treasures, and **why** would someone want to go into such a room to **pray**? This verse contains a great **figure of speech**, which we can understand if we jump ahead to **verse 19**:

6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

In these verses, “**treasures**” refer to our “**thoughts**”. We should endeavor to keep our thoughts centered on **godly, spiritual things**, not on sense-knowledge things of the world. “**Moth**” is a figure of speech for **fear** that can eat away at our thoughts; “**rust**” represents **worry** that can corrode and destroy our godly, positive thoughts. If our thoughts are focused on **worldly things**, doubt, worry, and fear will allow the **thief**, the adversary, to break into our lives.

So, we see from these verses that our **treasures** are our **thoughts**. Where is the **storehouse** for these treasures of ours? The next verse gives the **answer**:

6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Our great “**treasures**” are our innermost **thoughts**, which we have **in our heart**, the seat of our personal life. Knowing this, let’s return to **verse 6**:

6:6a But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet (*treasure storehouse*) ...

When we pray to God, we **don’t** need to go into a literal room and close the door: **instead**, we pray to God **from our heart**. We can pray to God in any **place**, at any **time**, silently **or** out loud. We are **not** doing it “for show” like the hypocrites, but as a “**heart-to-heart**” with our heavenly Father.

6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen (*Gentiles*) do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

This verse clearly shows us what prayer is **not**. When we pray, we are **not** to recite some pre-written formula. And, we are **not** to **repeat** the same prayer over and over again, like the “vain repetition” the Gentiles did as they prayed to their gods. **Our prayers** are to be **from our hearts**: **spontaneous** and in our **own words** as we **pour our hearts out** to our heavenly Father.

6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

God **already** knows what we need, even **before** we ask Him. This brings up the **question**: If God **already knows** what we need before we ask, **why should we pray?** In order for us to **receive** from God, we need to have **the proper mind-set**. Prayer establishes our **believing** and **trust**: we are **acknowledging** what **Philippians 4:19** tells us: “But my **God** shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Now we come to the first part of **verse 9**:

6:9a After this manner therefore pray ye...

The **prayer** that follows, often referred to as “**the Lord’s Prayer**” even though the Gospels record many **other** instances where Jesus Christ prayed, was **intended** to be a **one-time**, inspired **example** of **how** to pray. It was **not** intended to be something people were to repeat verbatim as part of their personal prayer life, but many people recite this prayer today.

Notice that verse 9 begins with “**After this manner...**” In other words, “Pray **like this...**” Jesus had just finished teaching his audience **not** to pray using vain repetitions, and now he was giving them an **example** of **how** to pray to God **from the heart**. When you pray, it’s **your own personal talk with your heavenly Father**: God wants to hear what’s on **your** heart.

One very important thing to keep in mind is that when we pray, we pray with **believing**. **Ephesians 1:19** says “And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his **power** to us-ward who **believe...**” If we want a power-filled prayer life, we need to **believe**.

We see this power of **believing** as we pray in **Mark, Chapter 11**. In the context, the disciples had just noticed that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed the day before had dried up from the roots overnight, and Jesus took this opportunity to **teach**. We’ll begin in **verse 22**:

Mark

11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith (*believing*) in God.

11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe *that* those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

11:24 Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

In **Matthew, Chapter 21** we find a **similar** record. Here, a **second** fig tree that Jesus cursed withered away, **this** time right before their eyes, and Jesus used this opportunity to **once again** teach on prayer with **believing, establishing** this great truth. We’ll begin in **verse 21**:

Matthew

21:21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith (*believing*), and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

We just read that if we **believe** and do not doubt, **we can remove mountains**. People who read these verses might be tempted to question the strength of their believing, because mountains are, after all, huge piles of rock. But Jesus Christ was **not** talking about **literally** making a **real** mountain disappear (what would the **profit** be?). **Instead**, he was referring to an **orientalism** that was widely known at the time. This is explained in the **Companion Bible**, where we read: “It was a common proverb to say of a great teacher who **removed difficulties** that he was a **rooter up of mountains**.” When Jesus Christ was teaching about prayer with **believing**, he referred to a nearby **mountain** to give his listeners something to **visualize**. At times our **problems** may **seem** insurmountable, “like that mountain over there”, but when we pray with **believing**, **God** will “**remove the mountains**”, taking care of any difficulties we may face.

We see how important **believing** is in our prayer life in **Hebrews, Chapter 11**:

Hebrews

11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

A familiar **literal translation** of this verse according to usage is: “Now **believing** is the **title deed** to things **prayed** for, the evidence they are yours before they are seen.” However, the word “**hoped**” in the King James Version is from the Greek word *elpizō*, meaning “**trusted**.” From this verse we see that **prayer with believing is trusting in God**.

I John

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in (*toward*) him (*God*), that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

The word “**confidence**” in verse 14 is from the Greek word *parrhēsia*, meaning **boldness**. Because we **trust in God**, we can come to Him with **boldness**. **Hebrews 4:16** tells us that we should “come **boldly** unto the throne of grace...” The word “**ask**” in verse 14 is from the Greek word *aitēō*, the verb form of *aitēma* which we saw in **Philippians 4:6** as a form of **prayer**. As we **boldly**, with confidence and **trust**, go to God with our prayers, He **hears** us.

Prayer to God is important not just for our **own** needs: we also pray for **others**. Consider **I Timothy, Chapter 2**:

I Timothy

2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;

Just like we saw earlier in **Philippians 4:6**, this verse contains **three** different words for **prayer**, that **figure of speech** “Synonym”. “**Supplications**” is the word *deēsis*, specific **petitions** to God. “**Prayers**” is *prosuchē*, our **pouring out our hearts** to God. The word “**intercessions**” in this verse is from the Greek word *enteuxis*. This word is translated “**prayer**” in **I Timothy 4:5**, its only other usage, and it more literally means “trusting, confiding access to God, giving prominence to **a child-like confidence or trust** when we pray”. From this verse, then, we see that it is **important** that we pray for **others** as well as for ourselves.

Let’s **continue** with **verse 2**:

2:2 For kings, and *for* all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

2:3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;

2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

From these verses in I Timothy we see that we are to pray for those who lead our country so that we can live **quiet and peaceable lives**. When our lives are **peaceful**, the Word of God can move **more freely**, helping **others** to be saved and to learn **more** so they can “**come unto the knowledge of the truth**”.

Not only can we **pray** with our **understanding**, but in this Age of Grace in which we live God **also** made it available for us to **pray perfectly**. Perfect prayer is one of the many benefits we realize when we **speak in tongues**, operating one of the nine manifestations of the gift of holy spirit that every one of us received when we got born again:

I Corinthians

14:14 For if I pray (*proseuchomai*) in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

When we **speak in tongues**, we don't understand what we are saying, **but** we are **praying** by way of our spirit. Look at the **next** verse:

14:15 What is it then? I will pray with (*in*) the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with (*in*) the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

God **wants** us to **pray with our understanding**, in our own words from our heart, **but** He **also** wants us to **pray in the spirit** by **speaking in tongues**. Also, remember that when we pray, we should pray with **thanksgiving**? Look at the first part of **verse 17**:

14:17a For (*when you speak in tongues*) thou verily giveth thanks well...

What are the **benefits** of praying by **speaking in tongues**? Look at **Jude 20**:

Jude

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in (*by way of*) the Holy Ghost (the holy spirit, *our gift in manifestation*).

As we **pray** by way of the spirit, by **speaking in tongues**, we **build ourselves up spiritually**.

Praying by speaking in tongues not only benefits **us**, but it benefits **others**. Let's read **Ephesians 6:18**:

Ephesians

6:18 Praying always with all prayer (*proseuchē*) and supplication (*deēsis*) in the Spirit (*by way of the spirit – speaking in tongues*), and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

So, speaking in tongues is **also** perfect prayer for **others** in the household.

But **how** can speaking in tongues be perfect prayer, and **why** is it so beneficial to us and others? Let's look at **Romans Chapter 8**, where we'll begin in **verse 26**.

Romans

8:26 Likewise the Spirit (*God*) also helpeth our infirmity (*singular in the text*): for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit (*spirit, our gift*) itself maketh intercession (*all texts omit "for us"*) with groanings which cannot be uttered (*speaking in tongues*).

8:27 And (*But*) he (*God*) that searcheth the hearts (*where you pray from*) knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit (*spirit, the gift you have*), because he (*it, holy spirit in manifestation by speaking in tongues*) maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

The **one** infirmity, or thing lacking, in our prayer life is that there are times when we know we should **pray**, but we **don't** know **what** it is we should pray for, or **how** to best put it into words with our sense-knowledge understanding. God made it available for us to **pray perfectly**, bypassing our understanding, by **speaking in tongues**. As we do, we are trusting in God that He **already knows** what needs to be prayed for, and our **trusting, believing action** by praying by speaking in tongues gets our mind-set to the point that He can intervene. We see the great **result** of this perfect prayer by speaking in tongues in the **next verse**:

8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his purpose*.

We know from **I John 5:3** that to love God is to keep His commandments, and we know from the context of **I Corinthians 14:37** that **speaking in tongues** is one of the things that God **commands** us to do.

So, as we **pray perfectly** by **speaking in tongues**, we are trusting in God, knowing that all things will "**work together for good**".

We have seen that **praying** is **important** to us. Prayer to God gives us the proper mind-set to receive from **Him**, the true source of all our supply. As we **pray with believing** and **thanksgiving**, whether by way of our understanding or by speaking in tongues, we are **trusting in God** that He will always come through for us and for those we pray for. God, our heavenly Father, truly does love us and wants the best for us.

- Dr. Rick Batt