



*Come,
let us pray*

*Come Let us
Pray*

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STUDY ONE

Come Let Us Pray

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

1. INVITATION TO PRAYER

We need to understand that prayer is (a) a love-communion with God, by which (b) we have and develop our fellowship with Him (I John 1:3), (c) we come to know Him more-His being and will-out of which (d) we worship, give thanks, make petition, and intercession. We are made for all this because we are made in His image, and so participate in His plan. Since God is the God of intercession (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:26-27), then so are we-by nature-intercessors.

2. THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

We need to come before Him because:

- (a) He bids us come, for we are commanded to pray (Exod. 20:3-4; Deut. 6:4; 10:12; Heb. 11:6; Ps. 50:15; Matt. 26:41; Luke 21:36; I Thess. 5:14-19; Luke 18:1-8). Note that there are many more commands to pray.
- (b) Prayer is the expression of our very life (Ps. 42:1-3; 63:1-8; 84:1-4, 10-12).

- (c) Our need of Him is such that we profit by coming, we need Him so much that we dare not, not come. Our coming is in accordance with Hebrews 4:16 and 11:6.
- (d) Prayer prevents us becoming self-meditators, when our meditation should be on Him.
- (e) We are prevented from working on our own, even where we seem to be doing God's will.
- (f) Most of all we are commanded to pray because prayer is part of God's plan and His salvation history. See below, and also Study 3, 'Jesus at Prayer-II'.

3. WE NEED PRAYER FOR PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S PLAN IN CHRIST

All history is a battle between God and evil powers. We are redeemed to share in that plan, e.g. (a) Acts 26:16-21, men will be liberated from Satan, (b) the Kingdom will come (Luke 11:2f.), (c) the church will share with Christ in defeating this world (I Cor. 15:24-28), (d) intercession will be made for all the saints (Eph. 6:18f.) until the ultimate victory of Christ (Phil. 2:11) when all the nations shall kneel to his Lordship (Rom. 1:5; 15:18-19; 16:25-26).

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STUDY TWO

Paul the Praying Apostle

(by Noel Due)

The material relating to prayer in the Pauline literature is extensive, though rigid classification is quite difficult.

The approach of this study is to take some representative examples of Paul's intercessory prayers and to see in what way he prayed and in what way this forms a useful paradigm for us.

1. I THESSALONIANS 3:11-13

Need to see the prayer in the context of his love for the church. (I Thess. 3:4ff.; cf. 2:5ff; 2:17ff.) and use of the word 'brethren'. No intercession for intercession's sake, only that which is born out of love (Acts 20:17-35; cf. Eph. 1:15ff.; 3:14ff.).

Paul, a man constrained by love (II Cor. 5:14; Phil. 3:2-11; cf. I Cor. 15:6ff.; I Tim. 1:15 ff.; etc.).

The manner of the prayer is 'thankful' and 'rejoicing' (3:9). Insistent and consistent (3:10). The specific wish to see them again and continue ministry there (3:10-11) is related to the hurried manner in which he had to leave after the first visit (Acts 17:1-10).

For them he prays to the Father.

'There is no title for God in Paul's letters that he employs with such frequency as 'Father'. Not only is God the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', He is 'our Father' (thirteen times) as He is simply

'Father' (twenty-one times). Nor is Jesus Christ alone called 'the Son of God' (eighteen times); Christians are 'sons of God' (Gal. 3:26; 4:7; Rom. 8:14, 19; 9:26), 'sons and daughters' of God (II Cor. 6:18), 'God's children' (Phil. 2:15; Rom. 8:21; 9:8). For Paul, He is 'our God' (I Thess. 2:2; 3:9; I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:20), 'my God' (Phil. 1:3; 4:19; II Cor. 12:21; Rom. 1:8).' D. M. Stanley, *Boasting in the Lord*, p. 35.

The prayer implicitly indicates the sovereignty of God over their mission and ministry.

Asks that they may increase and abound in love (cf. I Cor. 13) 'so that' He may 'establish' (i.e. buttress, support and stabilize whatever the future) their hearts 'unblamable in holiness' (i.e. practical outworking of their position in Christ; N.B. the relationship to love) before the coming of the Lord (all true prayer has an eschatological view, cf. Rom. 8:18ff.).

2. EPHESIANS 1:15FF.

'For this reason', i.e. in the light of the marvellous exposition of the Gospel that he has given in the first section.

The manner of the prayer 'without ceasing' and full of thanksgiving.

The One to whom the prayer is directed: 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory' (I Cor. 2:6ff.; II Cor. 4:6; James 2:1; cf. Ps. 29:3).

THE CONTENT OF THE PRAYER:

(a) 'A spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.' 5:18 indicates that they have the Spirit and 1:3 indicates that they have the blessings. Paul thus prays for the ongoing work of the Spirit (cf. John 14:26; 16:14; I Cor. 2:10; cf. Gal. 3:3). 'Wisdom' is that which comes down from above

(James 3:13-18), by 'revelation'. There is no natural knowledge of God and His great plan and purpose as has been outlined in 1:1-14.

(b) 'Eyes of your heart may be enlightened', i.e. the inner man, at core. The 'heart' as the seat of the mind, emotions and will.

(c) 'Hope of his calling', etc., i.e. the immeasurable wonder of the richness of the Gospel of grace.

3. EPHESIANS 3:14FF.

'For this reason' refers to 3:1 which refers to the glorious redemption of Ephesians 2.

The understanding of God as Father which causes Paul to kneel (not stand), cf. 1:2; 3:17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23.

That He would grant (according to His riches) for them to be strengthened with power through the Spirit (Acts 1:8; I Cor. 2:5-6; cf. Rom. 8:13) to the inner man (at core) (cf. II Cor. 4:16; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22, 23; Col. 3:9-10) and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20; cf. John 14:23; 15:4. Also see Rom. 8:9, 10 where the dwelling of Christ and the Spirit are held to be of the one lump).

Rooted and grounded in love (perfect passives) that they may be able to understand the extent of love that is beyond knowledge (3:18, 19) which is to be filled with all the fulness of God (cf. John 14:23; Rom. 8:9-10; Col. 1:27, qualitatively not quantitatively).

4. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The consistent theme is growth in the grace and knowledge of God in order for stability and maturity to abound.

There is no special term in the New Testament for one who intercedes. Intercession is the outworking of life and ministry.

Prayer and the relationship to the Father.

The primacy of love.

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STUDY THREE

Jesus at Prayer-I

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

1. INTRODUCTION: JESUS' PURPOSE IN PRAYER

In Study 3 we will see more regarding Jesus' purpose in prayer. Prayer is not merely a devotional exercise. It has to do with God's world-wide, and time-wide mission and plan.

2. JESUS WAS ALWAYS A PERSON OF PRAYER

Whatever Jesus' life of prayer prior to his baptism, the Temple was for him 'the house of prayer'. See Luke 2:49-'my Father's house', John 2:16-'my Father's house', cf. Mark 11:17-'house of prayer for all the nations' (Isa. 56:7). Note the wide survey of prayer, contrasting Mark 11:17, Isaiah 56:7 and Psalm 2:8-9.

3. PRAYER IN HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY

- (a) Prayer at his baptism-Luke 3:21, cf. Psalm 2:8-9. This with the visitation of the Spirit of prayer.
- (b) Prayer prior to the temptation (Matt. 4:2ff.). Note the link with fasting, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the word of God.

- (c) Prayer relating to his ministry (Luke 4:42; cf. 5:17).
- (d) Prayer prior to choosing his disciples (Luke 6:12-16).
- (e) Prayer prior to questioning his disciples whom they thought him to be (Luke 9:28).
- (f) Prayer at his transfiguration (Luke 9:28f.-a most significant preparation for going to the Cross).
- (g) Prayer during and relating to his ministry, as in Luke 10:21ff.-especially the sending forth of his disciples (cf. Luke 9:1-8; 10:1-21). Note this prayer was said to be 'in the Holy Spirit'. Note also his many prayers related to blessing (Matt. 19:13), thanksgiving (John 6:11; Luke 22:19; 24:30). As regards healings prayer is not explicitly said to have happened, but see Mark 7:34, and many claim that the laying on of hands implies prayer. This could be so.
- (h) Prayer at the raising of Lazarus (Luke 11:41-42).
- (i) Prayer for Peter prior to the Cross (Luke 22:32). How would Peter have survived without this prayer?
- (j) Prayer prior to the Cross as in John 17 for the disciples, and the whole church.
- (k) Prayer for the gift of the Spirit to the church (John 14:16; cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33). We do not know when this prayer was made, but we know it was made.
- (l) Prayer to the Father in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46; cf. Heb. 5:7-9).

- (m) Prayer on the Cross: (a) 'Father forgive them. . .' (Luke 23:34),
(b) 'Father into thy hands. . .' (Luke 23:46).
- (n) Jesus-as Lord-still prays for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:23-25).

Note the reasons for praying in each of these situations. There was the time-wide, world-wide purpose, and then there was the immediate, local purpose.

4. JESUS THE MAN OF PRAYER AND US

We note that Jesus gave teaching regarding prayer (Luke 11:1-13; Mark 11:20-26; John 14:12-14; 15:7-11; 16:23-24) but his example of prayer is the greatest thing-how and when he prayed, as also what he prayed for, and that for which he prays.

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STUDY FOUR

Israel at Prayer

(by Grant Thorpe)

1. From the beginning of the history of faith, the prayers that a person may pray have been conditioned by what God has revealed about Himself. Those who 'called on the name of the Lord' would have known the purpose and promise of God revealed to Adam. From the time of Abraham, the people who flowed from him-Israel, and now, the church-have prayed in the light of the covenant made with him and the further covenants made with Israel. We are wholly reliant for our prayers on the promise of God to be gracious to us, and the purposes of God indicated in His revelations. There can be no other prayers than these to the living God.

2. Prayers of particular Israelites are scattered through the Scriptures-for example: Abraham (Gen. 18:22-33); Moses (Exod. 33-34); the Psalms of David and of other people (intended as prayers for all of Israel); Hezekiah (Isa. 37:14-20); Jeremiah (12:1-4; 14:7-9); Daniel (9:3-19-see next study). For all of Israel, prayer was conditioned by the fact of the temple worship. It was here that God's presence amongst them was portrayed and assured to them.

3. The prayer of Solomon at the time of dedicating the temple brings together a number of elements of Israel's worship and we will focus on these.

II CHRONICLES 6-7

1. Solomon knew he was praying to the high God-there was no other like Him (6:1, 14, 18). Israel has seen the geographic fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant and knows that their God can do as He wills amongst all the nations-and therefore, amongst all the idols of the nations.

2. All that has transpired Solomon knows is the outcome of God's covenant with his father. It is this God's keeping of covenant which particularly stands out in Solomon's mind as unique about Yahweh (6:14).

3. With the covenant is now also the fact of the kingdom (II Sam. 7:12-16; these are linked also in Ps. 89 and 132). God will establish the life of Israel under His king and therefore one's personal affairs (and prayers) must relate to the way God has chosen to bless His people. God forestalled David's desire to erect a temple until He had assured David that He would establish David's house. (We should note that all Christian prayers are preceded by the establishment of Christ's kingship.)

4. Jerusalem is the place chosen by God to meet with His people. Solomon knows that it is God who has determined the progress of affairs as regards this temple, and in particular, its location-this was fixed by a word from a prophet telling David to offer a sacrifice at the place where a judgement against Israel was concluded (II Sam. 24:18-25; cf. Ps. 132:13-18). This focusing of a place to offer prayers was not intended to limit the offering of prayers in other places, but to assure Israel of the reality of God's presence amongst them.

5. The prayers offered relate to:

- (a) judgement-God knows the secrets of all;
- (b) the restoration of Israel after defeats, droughts, famines or any plagues; God knows the reality or otherwise of each prayer;
- (c) foreigners coming to fear God;
- (d) kingdom battles;
- (e) the return of Israel from captivity-given that Israel's covenants were stated in terms of the land, the worship and the kingship, this is effectively a request that God would renew the covenant after Israel had broken it; (all of this had been anticipated in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28; also 4:25-31).

6. The temple worship included feasts, singing, teaching and other elements, but the centre of it all was the sacrifices with a view to expiation (the shedding of blood) and fellowship with God (the fellowship meal). In this instance, God Himself ignites the sacrifice and assures His people that this is His house and that their worship is accepted.

7. Solomon is told that his prayer is heard. Warnings are added lest any presume on the goodness of God. In fact, Solomon could not fulfil the kingly duty of leading the people in faithfulness; this awaited another Son of David.

8. In fact, Christ has come as Temple and King, the new 'locale' in history by which we have been assured that God is amongst us and the one by whom God will assure our well-being. The church as the people of Christ-his body-is the continuance of this assurance and is the context for our prayers.

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STUDY FIVE

Things Preventing and Promoting Prayer

(by John Octoman)

1. INTRODUCTION

Often when we come to prepare a study such as this we go, for one reason or another, to the many books on the subject. To the theologians for some ideas, hopefully something new and certainly something that will make an impression. Now there is nothing wrong, and much right, in research and reading when preparing-and many rich insights are gained in doing so. However, if all we have is obtained in this fashion it becomes lifeless and dull. C. S. Lewis speaks of 'theological abstraction', and says, 'the abstraction's value is almost entirely negative'.

Many Christians struggle with the matter of prayer and the seeming multitude of distractions, disruptions and the old 'enemy', time. Many also know the feeling of failure in relation to prayer, and the associated feelings of guilt. We relate readily to the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'. It must be constantly remembered that we are not justified by our prayers, either in their number or quality-but totally by His grace.

We need also to see that we are not alone in the matter of prayer, the Scriptures give us some clear direction and the Holy Spirit strengthens and enables us to pray.

2. THINGS PREVENTING PRAYER

The following passages highlight those things preventing effectual prayers (i.e. those that are heard by the heavenly Father and are answered according to His grace).

Psalm 66:18: 'If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened-but truly God has listened; he has given heed to the voice of my prayer' (cf. Prov. 15:29; 28:9; John 9:31).

Isaiah 1:15: 'When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood . . .'

James 4:1-4: 'What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.'

Acts 8:18-24: 'Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, *he offered them money*, saying, '*Give me also this power*, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'Your silver perish with you, because *you thought you could obtain the gift*

of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.' And Simon answered, 'Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.'

I Peter 3:7: 'Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honour on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered' (cf. I Cor. 7:5).

3. THINGS PROMOTING PRAYER

God's action and purpose is in and for love (Rom. 8:28) so all prayer is in and for love (i.e. Matt. 5:43-48). 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

Romans 15:30: 'I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf. . . ' (cf. Rom. 5:5, ' . . . *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit* which has been

given to us'; also Gal. 5:22). Colossians 1:8 (Epaphras), '. . . and has made known to us your love in the Spirit'.

Ephesians 6:10-20: 'For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.' 'Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints' (cf. Rom. 8:26-27; John 4:23f.; Phil. 3:3; Jude 20).

Jesus, throughout his ministry made it clear that he was not about his own 'thing', but was always doing his Father's will (i.e. John 6:38-40; 4:34). He thus taught the disciples to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', and in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus looked towards the cross, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Matt. 26:39).

To pray according to the will of the Father, is to know that He hears what is asked and that we obtain that request.

I John 5:14-15: 'And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.'

'Our petitions are granted at once: the results of the granting are perceived in the future' (Plummer).

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STUDY SIX

Jesus at Prayer-II

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

1. JESUS' UNDERSTANDING OF PRAYER

(a) Jesus understood God as his Father, and prayed to Him (Luke 10:21f.; John ch. 17). John's Gospel says 40 times that he was sent by the Father, that he came to do the Father's will, that he worked with the Father 'the works of God', that God's works were to go on, that the disciples would be involved in these. Thus his view of prayer and its operations can be seen in John 17. Working with the Father without prayer was impossible. So also for the disciples.

(b) The prayer Christ gave to the disciples sets out not only the way his followers should pray, but also the substance of their prayer (see Luke 11:1ff. with Matt. 6:9-15). Note their prayer is to the Father. We conclude that the Father and prayer are closely linked.

(c) Jesus saw prayer as universally indispensable. The Temple was 'the house of prayer for all nations' and 'my Father's house' (Luke 2:49). Whilst Christ affirms this, he also speaks of the new worship which was to come, and which in fact had already come in, but would need the gift of the Spirit, i.e. the Spirit's coming at Pentecost (John 4:19-24; cf. Phil. 3:3). He purged the Temple twice (John 2:13-22; Mark 11:15-18; Matt. 21:12-13) because of its holiness and its centrality to human need. Isaiah 56:6-8 and kindred references

(Mic. 4:1-2; Isa. 2:2f.; Zech. 8:3; 2:11; 14:16) show that Christ as the New Temple (Eph. 2:20-21; I Cor. 3:16) is the only one in whom (or, in whose name) man may offer true prayer to God.

(d) Jesus saw prayer linked with the will of God, i.e. His plan for creation and salvation history. Whilst prayer is certainly personal, it is primarily for the fulfilling of God's plan, in which He has ordered that man should participate. In modern terms, we would say that prayer is personal, that it is national and that it is universal, i.e. for all tribes and nations, that ultimately every knee shall bow to the Son, and in him to the glory of the Father. This is what Jesus had in mind.

2. SOME OF JESUS' PRAYERS

(i) The Lord's Given Prayer

See Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:1-4. Often called the Lord's prayer it is a prayer given to us to pray, and to use as a paradigm of prayer. It must be seen as a prayer relating to the Kingdom as present obedience to God, to salvation history, and to the coming of the Kingdom in the eschaton. It speaks of Fatherhood, of God's will, and of His supply of food and care even in the face of evil powers who persecute the believer. It asks to be kept from the power of the Evil One. Forgiveness is part of present Kingdom life and is of primary importance. It is impossible to understand this prayer if it is not seen in the context of the whole of the Sermon on the Mount.

(ii) The Lord's Special Prayer of Praise and Understanding to the Father

See in Matthew 11:25-27 and Luke 10:21-22. Here Jesus addresses His Father as King over all things, acknowledges that when the cities

of Galilee have rejected him, yet that is the Father's will. He is content in the Father's will.

(iii) Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John Chapter 17

This is an important prayer for it reveals the understanding of the subject of true prayer. The following objects and themes of prayer can be seen, and they show the love of the Lord for his people (cf. John 13:1) as follows:

(a) **1-5**. Jesus is thinking of (i) fulfilling the Father's will, (ii) keeping the elect, (iii) his glorification by the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

(b) **6-19**. Jesus is praying for the disciples as he has shown the Father's name to them, as he is about to go from them and will not be with them, especially as they will be shocked by the event of the Cross. He is concerned about the enmity they will receive from the world, and so prays for them to be sanctified through God's word. It is for their sakes he consecrates himself that they too may be consecrated in the truth.

(c) **20-26**. The Lord now prays for those who will come to have eternal life by believing on Christ through the word of the disciples. He prays that the disciples and the new believers may be utterly one-out of his glory. This unity is the true condition for bringing the world to see who he is. He prays in this way that they may see his glory now, but more especially in the age to come.

3. CONCLUSION: THE PATTERN OF JESUS' PRAYER.

Up to this point in all of our studies we have seen certain elements (criteria?) for true prayer. If we read Jesus' prayers mentioned above, we will see the personal, the community and the universal elements for which he prays. It is all with a view to salvation history, the will of God being fulfilled, and of God being glorified. We then can come to that one in such prayer and its results, when we are in Christ, and Christ in us (cf. John 15:1-8).

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STUDY SEVEN

Daniel at Prayer

(by Grant Thorpe)

1. Numbers of prophets could have been chosen to illustrate the manner and content of prophetic prayer: e.g. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, or Jeremiah. For example, the narrative in Exodus and Numbers shows that intercession was an integral part of Moses' function as a prophet: he prayed for Israel as captives (Exod. 5:22-6:1); for Pharaoh (e.g. Exod. 10:16-20); for Israel as they needed protection and provisions (Exod. 14:10-31; 15:22-25; 16:1-30; 17:1-7); for the preservation of Israel from judgements (Exod. 32-34; Num. 11-12; 14:1-45; 16:1-50; 17:6-13; 20:1-13; 21:4-9).

The study of prophetic prayers is important for the church because we are all involved in prophetic ministry and can only understand our lives correctly in the context of the kingdom of God. This study will focus on Daniel.

2. Daniel and his associates had been deported in the first wave of what was to be known as the Babylonian captivity. In the words of Habakkuk (Hab. 2:2-4) they would have to learn to live by faith in a context of judgement. Daniel 2 shows Daniel and his friends seeking mercy because their lives are threatened by the caprice of the one by whom Israel had been judged (2:17-18). We should note that any attempt to pray that does not recognize the judgement under which all creation rests is doomed to frustration (cf. Rom. 8:18-25, 35-39).

3. Daniel was confident that the God who had made a covenant with Israel was superior in wisdom, power and knowledge; he praised God for these when his prayer was answered; he then freely witnessed to these realities.
4. In Daniel 6 the prophet could not be forstalled in his prayers by the fear of man. He feared God and longed for the restoration of Jerusalem according to prophetic statements or prayers in Deuteronomy 4:25-31, II Chronicles 6:36-40 and Jeremiah 29:11-14.
5. The prayer in Daniel 9 shows the prophet awakened by a prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11-12. He is now aware of the purposes of God for the kingdom; he is already aware of God's covenant faithfulness (9:15), His righteousness (9:7, 14), His mercy and forgiveness (9:9, 18), but also, His rightness in cursing Israel (9:14). These do not cause him to be slack and presumptuous; rather they awaken him to eager prayer that the things God has promised will occur.
6. Daniel is also acutely aware of the faithlessness of himself and of the people of Israel, and of God's curses or judgements which have come upon them, and also, of the unconcern manifested by Israel that this is so (9:3-14).
7. But still he prays. His confession of the sins of Israel is in the light of the greater confession of the nature and purposes of God. He asks God to act for His own sake and for the sake of His reputation in the earth (9:16-19). Moses interceded for Israel on several occasions, fully aware that Israel had no call on God because of her faithfulness, but fully aware also of the purpose of God for the nation and for the surrounding nations who would

learn from what happened to Israel (Exod. 32:11-14, 30-34; 33:12-34:9).

8. Many things were then revealed to Daniel and he sought therefore to understand what the revelation indicated for Israel. **Daniel 10:12** shows that it is important to wait on God to know His intention with regard to the affairs of the kingdom.

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STUDY EIGHT

The Prayer of Faith

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

1. THE PRAYER OF FAITH

The following passages relate to the prayer of faith: James 5:15-18; Matthew 6:7-14; 7:7; Mark 9:23-29; 11:22-25; I John 5:14-15.

2. THE NATURE OF FAITH

In Mark 11:12-14, 20-26 Jesus gives teaching on the prayer of faith. He says, 'Have faith in God'. He then adds that if a man says a certain thing and does not doubt in his heart, but believes what he says will come to pass, then it will be done for him. He says, '. . . whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours'. It is necessary then to discover the meaning of faith.

Faith has various meanings but generally they are based on the faithfulness of God. What He is, does, and promises, is the basis of faith and there is no other basis. Faith is belief in, trusting and resting upon God, union with Him, feeding upon Him, receiving what God gives, reliance upon, and obedience to Him. Only in that context can one know the will of God, and pray according to it. Faith is not something originating in man for it is a gift of God. It is not something man can summon up from his own resources.

3. PRAYING IN FAITH

In Mark 9:23 Jesus tells a man, 'If you can! All things are possible to him who believes'. That man responds, 'I believe; help my unbelief'.

In John's Gospel in particular the noun 'faith' is not present but the verb 'to believe' is used many times. Often it indicates different stages of believing. The prayer of faith is that prayer of asking by one who believes at a certain point that it is not only what God can do, but will do, i.e. that this is God's immediate will.

4. PRAYING THE PRAYER OF TRUE FAITH

Praying in faith is essential to God answering prayer. I John 5:14-15 shows that we can know God's will (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:17). The statement in John 14:13-14 and 16:23-24, 'ask in my name', is linked with 'if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you' (John 15:7), and these references add up to, 'You abide in me, and you will be one with me, and you will know His will, so that in asking according to His will (cf. I John 5:14-15) whatever you ask will be done. This will be the prayer of faith'.

Faith in God comes by a revelation of God through the word of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17). It is by the Spirit that this word is uttered to the listener (I Pet. 1:12) so that faith is born. To believe is to obey (Rom. 10:16). A believer can be weak or strong in faith (see Rom. ch. 14, and I Cor. ch. 8). When one has a full-bodied revelation of God-by the word and the Spirit-then one knows the nature of God, and knows His will, (a) in a general sense, and (b) in a specific sense by seeking His will at a certain point. When a believer does not really know God and His word, he may think that 'such-and-such' is God's

will when it is not. I John 5:14-15 are key verses to praying the prayer of faith. We have concluded above that the prayer of faith is that prayer which is prayed according to the known (revealed) will of God.

What we need to keep in mind is that God's will relates, (a) to His full salvation plan, (b) to the life and action of the community of believers, and (c) to each believer and his need. In John 7:17 Jesus gives a condition for knowing the will of God, i.e. 'If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know. . .' It is then (and thus) that the prayer of faith is prayed. Again see James 5:15. This is the prayer of faith-the prayer of the sick man, or the elders, or both.

Note on Mark 11:22-24. We ought to study the whole of this passage. Verse 23 speaks not of praying but of saying-in faith. That is when a seemingly impossible act happens, it comes from saying, and prayer is not actually mentioned. In verse 24 he speaks of praying with belief so that what you have believed (for) will be received, and it will be yours. Prayer here-as in Matthew 6:7-14-relates to total forgiving of all others.

Note on the phrase 'the prayer of faith'. Every true prayer is a prayer of faith. Unless we are in the Father, the Son and the Spirit we cannot pray to the Father, by the Spirit, in Christ's name. To pray in Them is to pray-generally-the prayer of faith.

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STUDY NINE

Persistent, Perpetual Prayer

(by Noel Due)

1. Key texts: I Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; Acts 1:14; 2:24 (cf. Grant's topic).
2. How do these injunctions relate to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:5ff. with regard to vain repetition, etc.? 'Longing to be seen' and 'vain repetition' are two sides of the one coin (cf. Luke 18:9ff.). 'They have their reward.'
3. What then, does it mean to pray without ceasing or to pray constantly? The creational structure of things means that all are praying all the time. The one to whom the prayer is directed is the important thing. Even 'good Christian prayer' can be directed to oneself (cf. Luke 18:9).

'So far is this 'pray without ceasing' from being absurd because extravagant that every man's life is in some sense a continual state of prayer. For what is life's prayer but its ruling passion? All energies, ambitions, and passions are but expressions of a standing *nisus* in life, of a hunger, a draft, a practical demand upon the future, upon the unattained and the unseen. Every life is a draft upon the unseen. If you are not praying towards God you are towards something else. You pray as your face is set-towards Jerusalem or Babylon. The very egotism of craving life is prayer. The great difference is the object of it. To whom do we pray? The man whose passion is habitually set upon pleasure, knowledge, wealth, honour, or power is in a state of prayer to these things or for them. He prays without ceasing. These are his real Gods, on whom he waits day and

night. He may from time to time go on his knees in church and use words of Christian address and petition. He may even feel a momentary unction in so doing. But it is a flicker; the other devotion is his steady flame. His real God is the ruling passion and steady pursuit of his life taken as a whole. He certainly does not pray in the name of Christ. And what he worships in spirit and in truth is another God than he addresses at religious times. He prays to an unknown God for a selfish boon. Still, in a sense, he prays. The set and drift of his nature prays. It is prayer either to God or to God's rival-to self, society, world, flesh, or even devil. Every life that is not totally inert is praying either to God or to God's adversary.' P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer*, p. 60f.

4. The 'importunate prayer' is one that flows from this constant attitude. Hence the relevance of Luke 18:1-8 and 11:5-13.
5. Two examples of importunate prayer: Jesus in the garden (Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46) and Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' (II Cor. 12:7ff.). 'Thy will be done' is the conclusion of prayer, not its beginning. The importance of prayer lies not in the results, but in the effects (cf. Heb. 5:7-10 and II Cor. 13:4). Similarity between prayer and God's sovereign purpose on the one hand and evangelism and election on the other.

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STUDY TEN

The Church at Prayer

(by Grant Thorpe)

1. When the church gathers for prayer, it is important that the simplicity of people coming before God be maintained. The church has the opportunity to lead people into a true practice of prayer by its public practice; but equally, it can distort its members' understanding of prayer—abnormalities can become established practice. For example, prayer should express 'a sincere and pure devotion to Christ' and not mere 'rigor of devotion' (II Cor. 11:3; Col.2:23).
2. The church's prayer is the expression of its life in Christ. Jesus had established for the church, an approach to God which was none other than his approach to the Father (John 14:12-13; 15:7-8, 16; 16:23-24, 26-27). When the church began to pray in this new way, it was in the light of their new knowledge of the Father and of their access to Him (Luke 24:52-53; Acts 1:12-14). When the Spirit was poured out, prayer had come to its full flow and power and the church devoted itself to prayer (Acts 2:42; 6:4).
3. The church's prayer cannot be considered alone but as part of the whole life of the church together. By the Spirit, the church is one body and has one mind and one concern. While the church recalls and lives in this truth, her members relate to one another in an

uncompetitive and non-retaliatory way and their prayers are unhindered. It appears that the early church spent considerable time together, not because it was prescribed, but because that was the way they now saw their life (Acts 2:42; there were three times for temple prayer per day). Jesus had said that they would have his mind as they 'agreed by talking a thing over' (Matt. 18:19-20; also I Cor. 2:16; 11:12-13). Luther writes:

'Combined prayer is precious, and the most effective, for which reason we also come together, and from which also the church is called the house of prayer. Oh, if God would that any gathering might pray in this manner, so that a common cry of the heart on the part of all the people might rise to God, what immeasurable virtue and help would follow such a prayer! What more terrible thing could happen to all the spirits of evil? What greater work could occur on the earth by which so many godly people would be preserved, so many sinners converted. For truly the church on earth has no greater power or work than such united prayer against everything that may strike against her.' (Quoted in Lenski on Matthew, p.706.)

It was an important function of leaders of the church to pray and to pray together (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).

4. The church's prayers are to be conditioned by their being a people who seek first the kingdom of God. When the early church was under threat, its prayers had in mind the safety of her messengers but showed a greater concern for the boldness of the proclamation (Acts 4:23-31) and the graciousness of her testimony (Acts 7:59-60).
5. The church's prayer should be a confession, an acknowledgement (which she cannot and will not avoid) that God is the holy Father; that Christ has revealed the Father in the saving of their persons; that, because of their sins, they have no claim on God's favours; that God has done all things well. This is adoration, worship, a spiritual sacrifice with which God is well pleased (Acts 13:1-3; 16:25; Eph. 5:18; Heb. 13:15-16; I Pet. 2:9-10).

Such prayers (it should be unnecessary to say so) are the life blood of the church-if for a moment she ceases to worship, she ceases to live as the church and has cut herself off from her centre and purpose.

6. The church is to intercede for all of the saints (Eph. 6:18). The burden of these prayers would be for their establishment and growth in faith, hope, love and righteousness, and for their physical well being as it related to these (e.g. James 5:13-16; III John 2).

The church is to intercede for all people and for their life together (I Tim. 2:1-4). Such prayers would be offered in the light of the message given to the church to proclaim to them-one could question whether there can be any prayer for the world which is not with a view to the peoples of the world listening to their Creator's word to them! (Cf. John 17:9.) It is apparent from Daniel that God's dealings with the nations are in the light of His purposes for His people.

The church is to intercede for the proclamation of the gospel (e.g. Acts 12:5, 12-17; 13:1-3; 15:22; 21:5; Rom. 15:30-32; I Thess. 5:25).

7. It is the will of God that we give thanks in all circumstances (I Thess. 5:18). This may appear similar to adoration but is the recognition that God has heard us in our prayers, delivered us from our enemies, supplied our needs (e.g. Ps. 107). Nothing has been truly received until we have given thanks.
8. The manner in which we pray can become the substance of bitter wrangling as at Corinth. There is therefore need for clear authority in each situation, based on an understanding of the

essentials of prayer and the varieties of expression that are legitimate. (See I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:26-40.)

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STUDY ELEVEN

Praying in the Spirit

(by Noel Due)

1. In Ephesians 6:18-20 and Jude 20, prayer is accorded as being in the Spirit. What does this mean? Does this imply that there can be prayer that is not in the Spirit? How does it relate to the charismata? What does it mean for our day to day walk in the faith to 'pray in the Spirit'?
2. I Corinthians 14:14f. indicates that prayer is not simply, or even primarily, an activity of the intellect. It relates to the whole person, to the spirit of man as much as to his mind. Paul's argument is that the gift of tongues enables a man to pray according to his spirit, but this cannot be immediately equated with praying in the Spirit (cf. I Cor. 13:1ff.; 14:20f.).
3. Prayer 'in the Spirit' in Ephesians 6:18 is related to putting on the armour of God. Indeed it can be argued that the putting on of the armour is in order to pray (Calvin). The armour is 'taken up' not 'made up'. Praying in the Spirit relates to living in the truth of the Gospel and being immersed in the Word.
4. In Jude 20, praying in the Spirit is linked with the expectation of the last day. It has an eschatological view. This leads naturally to consider Romans 8:23ff.

'The Spirit, received as an earnest of something more to come, has engendered a hope that leads us to groan after the object of that hope.' Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God-Seeds of Abraham*, p. 110.

For the reception of hope through the Spirit, see Gal. 5:5 and I Cor. 2:9f.

5. Prayer in the Spirit is thus linked to the tension of 'now' and 'not yet' and is the product of our current sufferings and afflictions. This tension is related to our sonship as revealed by the Spirit (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4f.; cf. Mark 14:36). In this respect Zechariah 12:10 is significant. Prayer 'after the flesh' is not cognizant of these things.
6. Romans 8:26ff. and I Corinthians 2:6ff. indicate that the Spirit himself prays. In our weakness and 'not knowing', the Spirit prays with us and on our behalf, in a way that is inexpressible. 'He who knows what God has in store for us prays that we might obtain it' (ibid. p. 113).
7. The security and hope of all this leads us with confidence to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14f.).

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STUDY TWELVE

The Person at Prayer

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

1. COMMAND, INVITATION AND ENTRANCE TO PRAYER

We have seen in previous studies that we are commanded to prayer (I Thess. 5:17). Our praying is not at our initiation, by our decision. We have also seen that God seeks us to worship Him (John 4:23). Fellow believers also call us to prayer (Micah 4:2f.). We know that we have access to God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 10:22). We are free to come to 'the throne of grace' (Heb. 4:16). All of this means joy, wonder and thanksgiving that we can come, without fear, and with boldness to God.

2. ELEMENTS OF PRAYER IN UNION WITH GOD

(a) We have seen that we pray to the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit. This is because we are weak, and outside of God can never pray. Our weakness is no hindrance to prayer: indeed it is a help.

(b) We are in the Father, and in the Son, and they are in us. This is living relational unity, the basis for all prayer. We come to know the mind of God, and know that He knows our minds.

(c) Our worship contains the elements of adoration, and thanksgiving. This often requires meditation, and meditation focused on the following objects: the Person of God (Ps. 63:1-8; 42:8; 119:55; 104:34), God's works (Ps. 8:3; 111:2; 145:5), God's word and law (Ps. 1:2; 119:15, 23, 48, 97, 99, 148; Rom. 7:22). When we worship we become 'worthful', and are grateful when we meditate upon God, and so increase our thanksgiving.

(d) Confession is an essential element of prayer. There is tremendous release in prayer: (i) Our confession will largely be of the goodness and greatness of God, His power to create, provide, redeem, sanctify and glorify His elect; (ii) We will want to confess our failure, and acknowledge our sinfulness, so that we will know its guilt and power are no longer with us (I John 1:8-9); (iii) We will confess our needs—physical, emotional, relational and spiritual, knowing He will also know and provide where it is good for us.

(e) Petitioning will arise from confession of our needs, but petitions are mostly for others. We are commanded to ask.

3. THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

In our other studies we have seen the place and nature of intercession. Isaiah 59 needs to be read thoroughly. Verses 16-19 show that intercession is intervention. We have the intercession of the Spirit within us (Rom. 8:25f.), and of the Son for us (Rom. 8:34f; Heb. 7:25), and in the Son and the Spirit we intercede for others (Eph. 6:18-20; I Tim. 2:1-3; etc.). We have seen that this intercession is prayer for others, but primarily in line with God's action in the universe, especially through His people. It is the prayer that God uses as we have dialogue with Him, and pray according to His will. It

accords with 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as in heaven'.

4. THE FINAL PRAYER

We are always praying for the day of His coming. This is seen best in Revelation 22:17 and 20.