

THE HOPE OF CHRIST THROUGH PRAYER

I. OUR LIVING HOPE

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God 1 Peter 1:20-21

- A. Through the ministry and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, we have been brought into a relationship with the Trinitarian God in whom we can have living faith and hope in a dark and dying world. God the Father purposed in His heart before the foundation of the world to save you and bring you into this relationship so that you would have this hope. (See Ephesians 1:4-5)
- B. Because we are in Christ and because He is alive, we can have a living hope in Him. This hope that is offered to us is not dead or perishing, but lively and durable. Living hope is active hope. It is a hope that actively believes in the impossible because our God is the God of the impossible. It is a hope most expressed and evidenced in our prayers.
- C. Christ's primary role in Heaven is being our eternal Great High Priest. Biblically, the high priest functioned as the intercessor or representative between the people of God and God Himself who brought the needs of the people before Him. While these high priests were mortal, Christ Jesus the Great High Priest is immortal and eternal. He resides at the right hand of God the Father.

...but He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:24-25

1. In OT times, only the high priest could go beyond the curtain in the Temple into the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwelled. At Christ's death, the inner curtain of the Temple was torn in two symbolizing our new direct access to the Father's presence through the blood of Christ. We now have direct access to the Living God. (Matthew 27:51, Hebrews 6:19-20)
- D. Jesus' ministry in Heaven as the Great High Priest is two-fold. Firstly, He lives to make intercession for us who follow Him. Secondly, He saves to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him.
1. **He lives to make intercession:** Because we are in Christ, He constantly prays for us. Jesus knows our needs and He knows our struggles. Therefore, He is constantly bringing our names before His Father in Heaven and His Father hears His prayers and answers them. (See John 14:13-14)
 2. **He saves to the uttermost:** The Greek word used here for "uttermost" is "*pantelis*" which means completely or fully. Christ has saved us fully through salvation. Yet, this saving power extends to our bodies and our souls in our day-to-day wrestling in the context of bodily healing, deliverance, provision, sanctification, etc.
- E. The Apostle Peter declared that Christ was made manifest for our sake so that our faith and hope would be in God. We no longer need to find our hope in anyone or anything aside from Him. He is the ever-present *I AM*. He is *El Roi* – the God who sees me. He is *El Olam* – the Everlasting God. He is *Jehovah Jireh* – the God who provides, and *Jehovah Rapha* – the God who heals you. (See 1 Peter 1:20-21, Exodus 3:1-15, Genesis 14:18, 21:33, 22:14, Exodus 15:26)
- Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21*

II. PRAYER: OUR ACCESS POINT TO THE GOD WHO IS ABLE

- A. The sacrificial death of Christ and His resurrection and ascension are the foundation and source of every spiritual blessing and saving benefit that comes to those who believe in Him. One spiritual blessing we have in the context of prayer is friendship with God. Christ takes a special interest in the welfare of His friends by saving them, providing for them, caring for them and delivering them.
1. The famous hymn written by Charles C. Converse states, "*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.*"

B. The Priestly work of Jesus has established our privilege to access the God who is able. As believers, we can have deep confidence in coming before the Living God through prayer. We do not need to hesitate or doubt our continual access to His presence. Our confidence should never be based on what we could do for Him or what we have done in our past, but rather on what Christ has done for us. (See also Romans 5:1-2, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 4:16)

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith... Hebrews 10:19-22

- C. Many in the Church struggle in their prayer lives because they don't properly understand the essence of prayer and why they should pray, or they see prayer as an unimpactful use of their time. There are three main reasons God wants us to pray.
1. Prayer expresses our trust in Him and is a means whereby our trust in Him can increase. In essence, Prayer causes us to depend on God more for our day-to-day wants and needs. We were created to depend on Him for everything. (See Luke 11:9-13, John 15:5)
 2. Prayer brings us into deeper fellowship with God, and He loves us and delights in our fellowship with Him.¹ As Christians, the greatest thing we can ever need in this life is greater depth in our relationship with God. He longs to draw nearer to us as we draw near to Him in prayer. (See James 4:8)
 3. Through prayer, God allows us to be more involved in activities that are eternally important. God has chosen prayer to be the primary way in which He rules over creation. Meaning, through prayer, we can impact a person or a situation for eternity in a positive way.
- D. Our God is a God of power and might. We have been given access to Him Who can do all things. Prayer is what infuses all our efforts and the genuine concerns of our hearts with God's boundless ability.² Two types of prayer we can engage in related to ourselves and the world around us are intercession and petition.
1. **Intercession:** intervening with a request on behalf of someone or something. This prayer type is others-focused. We intercede for others when we pray for their provision, protection, justice, safety, salvation, etc. We intercede when we pray for a people group, nation, or conflict of some type. (See Psalm 122:6, 1 Timothy 2:1, Matthew 5:44, Romans 8:26-27)
 2. **Petition:** personal requests to God regarding our personal needs and desires. This prayer type is self-focused. There are four main themes we should bring before God on our behalf: sanctification, breakthrough/deliverance, healing, and provision. Consistency in praying over these themes is important. (See Colossians 1:9-11, Matthew 7:7-11, 1 John 5:14-15)

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened...If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will you Father who is in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” Matthew 7:7-8,11

- E. Andrew Murray says, *“Beware in your prayers, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief but by assuming that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, above all that we ask or think. Each time you intercede, be quiet first and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, of how He delights to hear Christ’s intercession for you, and of your place in Christ, and expect great things.”*

III. PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE

- A. The primary temptation regarding a lifestyle of prayer is that it is ineffective. However, prayer is the most effective spiritual and physical activity we could engage in. Individual believers and the corporate church have seen radical moves of God due to prayer. Revivals have taken place due to prayer. Miracles take place due to the prayers of the saints.
- B. Prayer is effective because it’s directed toward our living God who hears us and responds to us. Our prayers are a rising incense before His throne. His attention is continuously on His saints, and He hears our every word.

Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

- C. Author Stephen Hendrick says, *“We would all worship better, fellowship better, give better, evangelize better, share better, and behave better if we were first humbling ourselves, confessing our sins, asking God’s Spirit to fill us, and submitting ourselves to Him in prayer.”³*
- D. Each of us need to decide for ourselves whether we will be passive Christians regarding prayer, or whether we who believe that there is power in prayer because our prayers are directed to the all-powerful God.

1 Grudem, Wayne .n.d. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Zondervan. 376-377

2 Kendrick, Stephen & Alex .n.d. The Battle Plan for Prayer. B&H Publishing Group. 19

3 Kendrick, Stephen & Alex .n.d. The Battle Plan for Prayer. B&H Publishing Group. 24

