

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

An important point to note first is that *we are not to use prayer to try and get God to do what we want done*. Many believers try and use prayer to get their own way, not God's way. Prayer must be compatible with God's will and God's way. Sometimes that may be our will and our way, but other times it may not.

1Jo 5:14-15 *"And this is the confidence which we have before 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 the requests which we have asked from Him."*

Prayer is not designed to get us out of trouble, but rather to express our helplessness, our humility, our total dependence on God, and our recognition of His grace and His mercy toward us. Prayer is not what we want for ourselves, but what God wants for us. In fact, prayer is an expression and an extension of Bible doctrine resident in the soul.

We fail in prayer because we fail to understand and utilize Bible doctrine correctly.

Joh 15:7 *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."*

Prayer was never designed to fulfill our lusts and desires; prayer is designed to fulfill the will, plan, and purpose of God for our lives.

That's why Jam 4:3 says *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your lusts."*

So prayer is not a Christmas list. Too many prayers are an expression of what you want, not what God wants. This is why we need to pray according to the will of God. To express the will of God in your prayers, you have to know what the will of God is and therefore how to ask for the will of God rather than your own will in any given matter.

Definition and Description.

Prayer is that function of the Royal Priesthood whereby the Church-age believer has access and privilege to present two categories of requests to God the Father.

1. Petitions--prayers for yourself.
2. Intercessory prayers--prayers for others.

Your prayers for others become a ministry unto themselves. However, many times your prayers for yourself indicate either lack of understanding of the problem-solving devices or the failure to properly utilize them. As a part of your equal privilege in election, you are a royal priest. And it is the unique function of the royal priesthood and equal privilege and opportunity for every believer to have an effective ministry. The most effective service is **invisible service** such as prayer. In past dispensations, there were specialized priesthoods in which certain people functioned as priests. A priest is a person representing the human race (believers) to God.

However, every believer is a priest and therefore any system of specialized priesthood in the Church-age is a false system. In reality, all believers in the Church-age are Catholic priests.

The word "Catholic" simply means "universal or concerning all mankind."

You have the right to represent yourself before God the Father in the name of the Son and through the power of the Spirit. God the Father receives our prayers through the person of Jesus Christ in the filling of the Holy Spirit. So prayer is communication with God for the expression of personal needs in petition and the function of

intercession for others.

Prayer is also a weapon and is meant to be used offensively, not defensively, as in the prayer, "Oh God, help!" **Prayer is a weapon which supports pastors and missionaries.**

Prayer is thought; therefore, it requires vocabulary, thinking, doctrine, and concentration. That's why praying in tongues is so ridiculous.

A misconception about prayer is how long you should pray. Prayers should be brief; this indicates concentration. The approach to prayer is a part of the predesigned plan of God (PPOG) of the Royal Family of God; it is to be a precise correct procedure. All prayer is offered to God the Father, not to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit. Any prayer offered to Christ is automatically cancelled, since it fails to follow God's procedure for prayer.

Paul said in Eph 3:14 ***"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,"***

Peter said 1Pe 1:17 ***"And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work,"***

So prayer is addressed to the Father, Mat 6:6-9. This is also illustrated by the model prayer for the disciples; the Lord said in Mat 6:6-9 ***"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.'"***

So all prayer is to be directed to the Father. It is to be in the name of or through the channel of the Son, Joh 14:13-14 ***"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."***

Believers are to pray in the enabling power (filling) of God the Holy Spirit, Eph 6:18 ***"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit."***

God the Father, the recipient of prayer, receives prayer from three sources in the Church-age.

- a. From God the Son, Heb 7:25.
- b. From God the Holy Spirit, Rom 8:26-27.

God the Holy Spirit prays for you when you need help and don't know you need help. He also prays for people who cannot pray for themselves. This is probably unique to the Church-age and related to the function of the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

- c. From Church-age believers as Royal Priests, Heb 4:16. ***"Let us be approaching the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and acquire grace with reference to seasonable help."***

True confidence can only exist in prayer when the believer attains at least the first stage of spiritual adulthood, spiritual self-esteem, 1Jo 3:21-22 ***"and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commands and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His command, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and impersonally love one another, just as He commanded us."***

Prayer effectiveness is related to reaching spiritual self-esteem. Failure in prayer is related to no personal love for God or mental attitude sins. Prayer is also related to the omniscience of God.

Isa 65:24 ***"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear."***

God hears the prayer twice: in eternity past, and at the time of the prayer. In fact, prayers and their answers were entered into the divine decrees, so that answers, rejections, petitions, interjections, and desires are all printouts of the decrees in the foreknowledge of

God.

God knew and answered all your prayers in eternity past. All answered prayer is part of your portfolio of invisible assets. In fact, there is a direct relationship between your prayer life and your portfolio of invisible assets. Prayer is a part of our equal privilege of election, a part of our royal priesthood. However, prayer is also a part of our Christian production. Prayer is a ministry designed for every believer. Each Church-age believer has the privilege and the right to enter into intercessory prayer for others which is an actual ministry. Therefore, prayer is one of the most powerful and effective functions in all of history. **Prayer is an invisible power directed toward invisible God in relationship to our invisible assets.**

Prayer is most effective when used by invisible heroes, i.e., believers who have attained spiritual maturity.

The more you grow in grace, the greater your spiritual growth, the greater your effectiveness in your prayer life. This effectiveness is not measured in terms of your eloquence when praying in public, but on the basis of your spiritual growth when praying in private. So the power of prayer increases as the believer advances in the PPOG for the Church-age.

Prayer as a Command from God.

Prayer is mandated for all dispensations. While the command for prayer precedes the existence of the PPOG and the royal priesthood, as in certain Old Testament passages, the New Testament records a separate way to pray related to prayer and the plan of God. The Old Testament command is found in passages like Jer 33:3 ***"Call upon Me and I will show you great and mighty things which you have not discovered."***

1Sa 12:23 ***"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you;"***

Prayer was at an all-time low just prior to the Church-age. Our Lord encouraged the disciples to pray during His time on earth so that they could receive power.

Mat 7:7-8, ***"Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking."***

Joh 15:7 ***"Ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you."***

Luk 11:13 ***"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"***

Since the disciples didn't ask, Christ breathed on them the Holy Spirit.

Joh 20:22 ***"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"***

Then 50 days later in Act 2:4 ***"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."***

Since we are commanded to reside in the PPOG, we are commanded to pray frequently or consistently, ***"without ceasing."***

1Th 5:17 ***"Keep on praying continually"*** is a mandate for both habitual and spontaneous prayer. Therefore, this verse can be translated, ***"Make a habit of prayer."***

In the PPOG you are always in a position to offer prayer.

Eph 6:18 ***"By means of all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit [the filling of the Spirit inside the PPOG], and with this in view, be alert in prayer for all the saints with persistence and petition."***

In the PPOG you have alertness for when prayer is needed. Phi 4:6-7 ***"Stop worrying about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall garrison your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."***

Thanksgiving is your capacity for appreciation and a part of the function of impersonal love.

You cannot divorce the faith-rest drill from prayer. Prayer demands faith!

Mat 21:22 *"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*

Mar 11:24 *"All things for which you ask in prayer, believe that you shall receive them, and they shall be given to you."*

Without the **faith-rest drill**, prayer doesn't work. The key to effective prayer is understanding and making application from your portfolio of invisible assets. Effective prayer is related to executing the commands of the PPOG.

1Jo 3:22 *"Whatever we ask, we shall continue to receive from Him, because we continue to execute His mandates and keep on doing what is pleasing in His sight."*

Mechanics of Prayer.

Public prayer should be short and should avoid repetition.

Mat 6:7 *"And when you are praying [publicly], do not use meaningless repetition, as Gentiles do, for they assume that they will be heard for their many words."*

God is not impressed with fancy vocabulary.

Remember, *"God does not look on the outward appearance, but on the right lobe."*

You cannot impress people and God at the same time with your prayers. In public prayer, you always add the principles of impersonal love, flexibility and thoughtfulness of others.

You must be thoughtful of others in prayer who are gathered with you. Long prayers should be reserved for private intercession and petition.

Mat 6:6 *"But when you pray, go into your private room, and*

when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father, who sees in secret, will provide for you."

There is an agenda for your private prayer.

1) Confession of sin (rebound), if necessary, 1Jo 1:9.

This is to ensure the filling of the Spirit or residence in the PPOG. Only prayer offered in the status quo of the filling of the Spirit will be heard.

2) Thanksgiving expresses the concept of worship in private prayer.

Eph 5:20 "Always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1Th 5:18 "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Capacity for thanksgiving comes from your personal love for God and your impersonal love for others. This capacity for thanksgiving increases as you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is hard to stay alert when you are in a routine situation, doing the same thing over and over again. Your thanksgiving to God is a part of your personal love for God. The more you love God and the more you appreciate Him, the greater your thanksgiving, and the greater your alertness in prayer.

3) Intercession means praying for others, Eph 6:18; Jam 5:16-18. This is a spiritual ministry. It requires that you have your own private prayer list.

4) Petition is praying for your own needs and situations where you are confused and have not yet learned a problem-solving device for that situation. Therefore, it is prayer offered on behalf of self, as per Heb 4:16 ***"Approach boldly the throne of grace, that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."***

To approach boldly means you approach in the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ. There is no place for sloppiness in prayer. Yet, that's exactly what we have today among believers: emotion, ignorance, stupidity, and sloppiness because we've ignored the Biblical principles that mandate precise correct procedure. Because of this God the Son as our High Priest makes intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, Heb 7:25.

God the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom 8:26-27. If God the Son and God the Holy Spirit offer prayer to God the Father, who are we to fail in this precise correct procedure? You can begin your prayer with the approach, "Heavenly Father, I'm coming in the name of the Son;" or you can conclude your prayer with "in Christ's name, Amen." You must go through channels, for this is precisely correct procedure.

There is no place for sloppiness in prayer. Accurate and effective prayer is one of the most powerful weapons in history. In prayer, the Christian takes the offensive against Satan in his world.

Prayer is not a system for controlling the lives of others. We cannot pray a prayer which violates the volition of someone else. The function of your royal priesthood is for the benefit of yourself and for the benefit of others, but it is not a system whereby you control others.

The Principle of Grace in Prayer.

In his prayer approach, the believer must be compatible with the place where prayer is received, the throne of grace. Since grace is the principle of prayer, no believer can petition for himself or make intercession on the basis of human merit, ability, morality, production, service or spiritual gift. Every believer approaches the throne of grace on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our great High Priest.

While the Father is propitiated with the work of Christ on the Cross, He is no respecter of persons. Therefore we must approach the Father from inside the PPOG, our position of fellowship. Inside the PPOG our Lord, during the First Advent, had maximum

effectiveness in His prayer life. That's why the believer out of fellowship is not only weak but has no effectiveness in his prayer life.

God does not answer prayer because the believer is "good," moral, sincere, benevolent, religious, concerned, altruistic, talented or possesses a pleasing personality. Answer to prayer is a **divine** decision. Therefore the believer's popularity with others is never a factor in answered prayer.

Prayer is a weapon. For any weapon to be used effectively, you must understand how it functions before you use it. Prayer must be used as a weapon. Most people blaspheme when they pray because of arrogance while praying and ignorance of how to pray.

Effective Prayer Related to Spiritual Childhood.

You can have effective prayer in spiritual childhood. But like everything else in spiritual childhood, it is limited and does not peak out until you reach spiritual adulthood. Three problem-solving devices begun in spiritual childhood have a definite impact on the effectiveness of your prayer life: **the rebound technique, the filling of the Spirit, and the faith-rest drill**. These, along with your persistence in the PPOG determine your prayer effectiveness.

The relationship between the effectiveness of prayer and the faith-rest drill is mentioned in many prayer promises.

Mat 21:22 *"All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*

Believing refers to the first stage of the faith-rest drill.

Mar 11:24 *"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive them, and they will be given to you."*

This refers to the faith-rest drill. Prayer cannot be effective unless the believer is residing inside the PPOG under the enabling power of the Spirit and consistent momentum from metabolized doctrine.

Metabolized doctrine will help you to understand both the limitations of your prayer life and the fantastic opportunities of your prayer life. It will limit you in some of your petitions, but it will expand your prayer life in intercessions. With these two areas of prayer correct, you will have a fantastic prayer life and you will enjoy every minute of it!

Effective prayer depends upon knowing what you're doing.

1Jo 3:22 *"Furthermore, whatever we have asked we have received from Him because we continue to execute His commands [residence, function, and momentum in the PPOG], and we keep on doing what is pleasing in His sight [spiritual adulthood]."*

The result of rebound in prayer is noted in Phi 4:6.

Phi 4:6 *"Stop worrying about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."*

Worry is mentioned because it's a malfunction of the faith-rest drill, as well as a sign that you're in the cosmic system. Anything that causes malfunction in the faith-rest drill also means malfunction in your prayer life. The faith-rest drill makes your prayers effective long before you've learned enough doctrine to know what's going on in the Christian life. All mental attitude sins are destructive to effective prayer life; they must be eradicated by rebound and the faith-rest drill.

Jud 20 *"Praying by means of the Holy Spirit."*

This emphasizes the importance of the power of God in prayer.

Effective Prayer Related to Spiritual Adulthood.

Confidence and effectiveness in prayer can only exist inside the PPOG when the believer has advanced to spiritual adulthood.

Confidence is a virtue directed toward God and is a virtue developed only inside the PPOG.

Confidence in prayer is dependent upon knowledge of God's will. Therefore, effectiveness of prayer must relate to cognizance of the will of God.

1Jo 5:14-15 *"And this is the confidence which we have face to face with 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 [and He does], we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him."*

This is really a prayer promise for the believer who has reached spiritual adulthood. At spiritual self-esteem we have that cognitive self-confidence to make all of our prayers effective.

Confidence in prayer reaches its peak at the point of spiritual self-esteem, and continues with maximum effectiveness in spiritual autonomy and spiritual maturity.

Heb 4:16 *"Therefore, let us be approaching the throne of grace with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in a seasonable time [when under the three categories of suffering for blessing]."*

Efficacious prayer exists only to the extent that the believer is grace oriented. Until the believer attains spiritual adulthood at spiritual self-esteem, his prayers will be semi-effective at best.

Prayer is virtue dependent. In each stage of spiritual adulthood, the believer's power in prayer increases sensationally. In spiritual childhood your prayers are not very effective because most of your petitions are related to arrogance, and your intercessions are only for those people you like. But all intercessory prayers must be impersonal.

The great power in intercessory prayer is **impersonal love**.

Remember also that prayer does not give you momentum; it is not a cure-all.

The promise to the believer in spiritual adulthood is found in Joh

15:7 ***"If you abide in Me [life in the PPOG], and My doctrines abide in you, whatever you wish shall be done for you."***

The important phrase is ***"and My doctrines abide in you."***

This promise however, is not like a blank check on which you can write any amount you want.

The key to prayer is doctrine first. When **doctrine** is in you, then you can ***"ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."***

The more doctrine you have in you the more you will know how to use the weapon of prayer effectively. One of your evaluations at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be how many of your prayers were answered.

Rom 12:12 ***"Rejoicing in hope [your confidence from spiritual self-esteem], persevering in undeserved suffering, devoted to prayer."***

One of the signs of spiritual self-esteem is your devotion to prayer in your own life.

Special Prayers.

The sanctification of food or saying "grace" before meals is a special prayer, 1Ti 4:4-5. This is a command for all believers.

1Ti 4:4-5 ***"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."***

There may be ingredients in the food that are very harmful, but offering this special prayer will protect you. Grace before meals has a two-fold purpose.

- 1) The expression of gratitude to God for His logistical grace support, which includes food.
- 2) Sanctification of that food to eliminate any potential, harmful

effects.

There is prayer for those in authority over us. As citizens of a client nation to God, this is a very important function for believers.

1Ti 2:1-2 "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness [life in the PPOG] and dignity."

Verse one points out that there are certain people for whom we should express our thanksgiving to God in prayer. In addition, there is intercession on behalf of all mankind and petition for ourselves. Verse two gets specific--we are commanded to pray for governmental authority and all other authority. When you reach spiritual adulthood and impersonal love toward all mankind, this prayer really becomes effective.

Having impersonal love gives you the ability to forget about the personality, the idiocy, the antagonism of others, and to actually pray for those people with whom you do not agree, who are leading our nation the wrong way, or who are damaging our client nation. Impersonal love gives you phenomenal power for such a prayer. The confidence to offer such a prayer comes from personal love for God.

There is also prayer for the sick, Jam 5:15 **"and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick."**

There is prayer for the unsaved, Rom 10:1 **"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."**

Paul prayed for the salvation of unbelieving Jews. Although you cannot pray that their volition will be coerced, you can pray that certain things will happen to try to open their eyes to the importance of the Gospel and have the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ.

There is prayer for your enemies, Mat 5:44 **"But I say to you, love your enemies [impersonal love], and pray for those who persecute**

you."

This prayer reflects the phenomenal dynamics in spiritual adulthood from the confidence of spiritual self-esteem and the impersonal love of spiritual autonomy.

There is prayer for spiritual adulthood, Eph 1:15-19.

Eph 1:15-19 "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

Phi 1:9 "And I pray this, that your virtue-love may abound still more and more in metabolized doctrine and all discernment."

Virtue-love is confidence from personal love for God and impersonal love toward man from spiritual adulthood. Virtue-love is not only a problem-solving device used to pass momentum testing, but at the same time, it is also maximum effectiveness in prayer.

This is especially true for these categories of special prayers.

Col 1:9 "For this reason, we also [Timothy, Titus, Luke, and Paul], from the day we heard [the Epaphras report - pastor at Colosse], we have not ceased to pray for you, and to ask that you might be filled with all metabolized doctrine of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Wisdom and spiritual understanding are characteristics of spiritual self-esteem and spiritual autonomy.

There is prayer for the communication and communicators of Bible doctrine: for pastor-teachers, missionaries, evangelists, 2Th

3:1; Heb 13:18.

2Th 3:1 *"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;"*

Col 4:2-3 *"Devote yourselves to prayer; in it, keeping alert with an attitude of thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us [teachers of Bible doctrine] as well, that God may open up to us a door for the teaching of the Word [doctrine], so that we may communicate [teach] the mystery doctrine from Christ."*

There is the prayer of widows, that is, ladies who become single either by the death, divorce, or abandonment of their husbands.

1Ti 5:5 *"Now she who is a widow and has been left alone, and has fixed her confidence on God, she also continues in petitions and prayers [intercession] night and day."*

This special category of widows in spiritual adulthood can pray both night and day (more often than once a day) for themselves and for others. As a result of their very tranquil and uncomplicated life, they are able to be effective in continuous prayer on behalf of others.

Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer.

Intercessory prayer is prayer for others. For example, there is the very popular prayer of Elijah on Mount Carmel which demonstrates the power of intercessory prayer for the nation, 1Ki 18:42-46; Jam 5:16-18.

Jam 5:16-18 *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit."*

The power of intercessory prayer was also exercised in the early church on behalf of Peter, who was in prison and about to be

executed.

Act 12:5 *"So Peter was being kept in prison, but fervent prayer was made for him to God by the church."*

The result of this prayer was Peter's dramatic deliverance. He was chained between two Roman soldiers. But with every Roman guard asleep, Peter simply walked out of the prison.

Prayer for unbelievers is legitimate and a part of your dynamics of intercessory prayer. However, remember not to attempt to violate their volition by asking God to make them believe in Christ.

Paul said Rom 10:1 *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them [Jews] is for their salvation."*

Do not let anyone tell you that you cannot pray for the unsaved; you can, you just can't pray that God will touch their volition. Our Lord's intercessory prayer for the Church is found in John 17, the most phenomenal intercessory prayer ever made. The disciples' prayer of Mat 6:9-13 is a prayer only for Israel during Christ's incarnation. It asks for the institution of His millennial reign, which cannot be fulfilled until the Second Advent. Therefore, it **doesn't** apply in the Church-age.

The dynamics of Paul's intercessory prayers are seen in Eph 1:15-23, Eph 3:14-21, and Phi 1:9-11. In all these passages, Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of those whom he prayed for. God also intercedes for us in prayer. Because we have related prayer to our personal desires and lust pattern, we have acquired certain false concepts with regard to prayer and Bible doctrine in general; therefore, many times both our lives and our prayers fail.

For this reason, our Lord Jesus Christ as our High Priest makes intercession for us at the right hand of the Father.

Heb 7:24-25 *"On the other hand, He abides forever; consequently, He holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore, also, He is able to deliver completely those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us."*

The fact that our Lord always makes intercession for us indicates that we have not completely understood the doctrine of prayer. Many times we pray under pressure or stress.

Under those conditions, the Holy Spirit does a better job and intercedes for us.

Rom 8:26-27, "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what is the thinking of the Spirit, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Our prayers often fail simply because of lack of concentration. We fail to concentrate on doctrine in the power of the Spirit which reflects our failure to concentrate in prayer in the power of this same Holy Spirit. We fail in prayer because we fail to metabolize and utilize Bible doctrine properly. Prayer is a part of Christian service, and as such, prayer must comply with the doctrinal principles of Christian service. Since every believer is in full time Christian service, he should express in prayer the concepts related to that service. Therefore, his intercession for others will be divine good rather than human good or dead works.

The principles of Christian service apply to every prayer just as much as they do to witnessing or to the fact that your job is a part of Christian service. Spiritual skills must precede production skills for the performance of divine good in prayer.

Spiritual skills include the filling of the Holy Spirit, cognition and inculcation of Bible doctrine, and the execution of the PPOG.

Therefore, our spiritual advance through perception, metabolization, and application of doctrine is directly related to our prayer life as a part of our Christian service.

Prayer and Problem Solving.

In 2Co 12:9, our Lord tells Paul why prayer is not the solution to

the problem in context (which is of course, the thorn in the flesh).

2Co 12:7-8 *"And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me -- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me."*

Then notice the correct translation from the original, verse 9
"Then He assured me for my benefit, My grace has been and still is sufficient for you; for My power is put into effect [made operational, accomplished, carried out, fulfilled] in the status of weakness [grace orientation]. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

The thorn suffering was causing all things to work together for good in Paul's life. Paul's recognition of his human helplessness to solve the problem opened the door for the divine initiative of grace and for the problem-solving devices to do the job. The most important thing in your spiritual life is to have ten problem-solving devices deployed; for there are no solutions to the problems of life apart from these problem-solving devices. The problem-solving devices are the system of application of doctrine to your experience.

It's interesting that prayer is not one of the problem-solving devices.

Paul prayed three times to God the Father that He would make this thorn in the flesh suffering go away. In reality, he was praying that his spiritual life be ruined, because the thorn in the flesh was suffering for blessing to accelerate his advance to maturity. Instead of using his problem-solving devices, Paul retreated in his spiritual life and tried to use prayer as leverage against God to get God to do Paul's will. Paul was using prayer in blasphemy.

Prayer is not a problem-solving device. Prayer is only effective in your life, when the problem-solving devices are being used. When you have the problem-solving devices, you have the solution to

everything. When you have the solution to every problem in life, you stop emphasizing the suffering and you rejoice in the solution (***"I will rather boast about my weaknesses"***).

The problem-solving devices must function for prayer to be effective.

Problem-solving device #1, Rebound - Psa 66:18 ***"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear."***

Problem-solving device #2, The Filling of the Spirit - Jud 20 ***"Pray at all times in the Spirit."***

Problem-solving device #3, The Faith-Rest Drill - Mat 21:22 ***"All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."***

Problem-solving device #4, Grace Orientation - Heb 4:16 ***"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."***

Problem-solving device #5, Doctrinal Orientation - Joh 15:7 ***"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."***

Problem-solving device #6, A Personal Sense of Destiny, - 1Jo 3:22 ***"and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight."***

Problem-solving device #7, Personal Love for God the Father - Phi 1:9 ***"In fact, I pray this, that your love [for God] may excel to the maximum"***

Problem-solving device #8, Impersonal Love for all mankind - Mat 5:44 ***"But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you"***

Problem-solving device #9, (+H) or sharing the Happiness of God - Phi 1:4 ***"always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for"***

you all,"

Problem-solving device #10, Occupation with Christ - Psa 116:1-2
"I love the LORD, because He hears my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live."

So the problem-solving devices must function for prayer to be effective. When prayer is ineffective, prayer becomes a system of manipulation, of distortion, of arrogance, an instrument of legalism, instead of an instrument of power and service to the Lord.

Four Categories of Petition in Prayer.

When you offer a petition or prayer for yourself to God, there is the thing for which you ask, called the petition, and then behind that petition is your desire or motive for it. The four categories that follow show that God views both parts of your prayer as separate, and answers each part either positively or negatively.

Positive - Negative. Your petition is answered yes, but your desire behind it is answered no.

For example, you pray to make a million dollars in order for your happiness; the answer is yes, you'll make a million dollars, but no, you will not be happy.

In 1Sa 8:5-9 and 19-20, the Jews wanted to have a human king they could see (petition), so they could be like other nations (desire to be happy). God answered their petition yes, and permitted them to pick out their own king. They wanted someone who was taller, stronger and more handsome than the kings of the nations around them; by this criterion they picked Saul.

Their desire to be happy with a human king was answered no; Saul turned out terrible and the Jews suffered miserably as a result.

In Psa 106:13-15, the Jews were tired of the great divine provision of manna, the greatest health food ever. They longed for the Egyptian meat and food they used to eat. God answered their

petition yes; He sent them quail. But the desire for satisfaction or "food happiness" was not answered; instead, they suffered terribly from it and thousands died.

Then there's the Negative - Positive. The answer to the petition is no; the desire behind the petition is answered yes.

In this example the answer is no, you will not make a million dollars, but yes, you will be happy.

In Gen 17:18, Abraham prayed that Ishmael, the son of Hagar, might be his heir.

God said no to Ishmael becoming his heir, but yes to the desire behind it--to have an heir; for he eventually had Isaac.

In Gen 18:23-33, Abraham prayed that God would spare Sodom. After bargaining with God, Abraham settled with asking God to spare Sodom if there were ten believers; he was sure there were at least ten believers in that large city of perhaps 200,000 people.

He was wrong; there were only three believers. The petition to spare Sodom was answered no; the desire that Lot and his two daughters be preserved was answered yes.

In 2Co 12:7-10 Paul prayed three times that God would remove his thorn in the flesh.

God answered no to the petition, because his suffering was the blessing of providential preventative suffering, designed to strengthen his spiritual self-esteem so that he might advance to spiritual autonomy, the more stable stage where one is less prone to arrogance.

Hence his desire, to continue to grow in grace and so glorify God was answered yes. Offering this prayer three times was an abuse of prayer by Paul. Paul prayed intensely for this thorn to be removed. Paul prayed urgently for its removal, but he was wrong to use prayer because this called for the use of the problem-solving devices. If God had answered Paul's prayer, Paul would have missed out on one

of the greatest blessings of life - spiritual maturity. The Lord did not even answer Paul until after he had prayed the wrong prayer three times. Remember what the Lord does not remove by way of intense suffering, He intends for us to resolve through the ten problem-solving devices. You do not pray about adversity; you use your problem-solving devices.

Positive - Positive. Both the petition and desire are answered yes. In Jud 16:28, Samson was blinded and tied up in the temple of Dagon. ***"Then Samson called to the Lord and prayed saying, O Lord Jehovah, please remember me and please strengthen me just one time, O God, that with one blow I may get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."***

Both his petition, to strike the Philistines, and his desire, revenge, were answered yes. Why? Not because God approves of revenge, but because of the degeneracy of the Philistines.

Samson was the instrument that God used. He got his strength back, wrapped his arms around two pillars of the temple, and pulled the whole building down on all of them.

In 1Ki 18, Elijah built an altar, dug a trench around it, and prepared a sacrifice for the Lord. Then he instructed that water be poured on the offering and on the wood three times, so much water was poured that it filled the trench.

Elijah then prayed that God would light his offering on the altar with fire. God answered yes.

1Ki 18:38 ***"Then the fire of God fell down and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and also licked up the water in the trench."***

His desire was expressed in 1Ki 18:36 ***"O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You are the God of Israel and that I am your servant, and I have done all these things at Your Word."*** This was answered yes.

In Luk 23:42-43 is the petition of the dying thief, ***"Then he kept***

saying, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into your kingdom.'"

This petition was answered yes. His desire was for salvation, and Jesus answered this affirmatively in verse 43, ***"Jesus replied to him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.'"***

In Joh 11:41-45, the petition was for the resuscitation of Lazarus; the desire was that the bystanders who witnessed this might be saved.

Both petition and desire were answered yes.

Joh 11:45 "Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary saw what He had done, and they believed in Him."

Negative - Negative. The answer is no to both the petition and the desire; in other words, God doesn't answer either. This leads us to our next point: reasons why prayers are not answered.

Why the Believer's Prayers are not Answered.

General reasons for failure in prayer are always related to carnality, being out of fellowship, or residence in the cosmic system. "Cosmic" comes from the Greek word "kosmos" which is translated world in the Bible, and it refers to Satan's strategy as the ruler of this world to control believers. It is His policy for the rulership of this world. In fact, Satan is called the ruler of this kosmos in Joh 12:31 ***"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out."***

This is why John said 1Jo 2:15 ***"Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in him."***

Jam 4:4 "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Now, Satan's cosmic system is composed of two separate

philosophies.

Cosmic one is Satan's exploitation of believers and unbelievers through their own arrogance. This is his means of controlling the human race. Satan invented arrogance, for arrogance was his original sin.

Cosmic two is Satan's propaganda and indoctrination college to educate and promote antagonism toward anything related to God, especially the grace of God.

Cosmic one emphasizes arrogance and abnormal preoccupation with self. Cosmic two emphasizes antagonism and intolerance toward the plan, purpose, and will of God, as well as toward all Christians executing it.

The target of cosmic one is yourself; the target of cosmic two is Bible doctrine.

In cosmic one, we destroy ourselves.

In cosmic two, we become antagonistic toward Bible doctrine.

So general reasons for failure in prayer are always related to carnality, being out of fellowship, or residence in the cosmic system.

Psa 66:18 *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Residence in cosmic one grieves the Holy Spirit, which means your prayers cannot be answered, Eph 4:30.

In cosmic two the believer quenches the Spirit, relying on human power rather than divine power in 1Th 5:19, and again, your prayers cannot be heard. The only prayer which can be heard is rebound, which is the private confession of your sins to God; in that sense, it is a prayer.

The general reason for malfunction of prayer and unanswered

prayers is always related to the believer's rejection of Bible doctrine. Whatever your reason for rejecting doctrine, it means you have no understanding of the mechanics of prayer. Only Bible doctrine teaches the mechanics of prayer and only Bible doctrine teaches the will of God.

Your prayers must comply with the will of God and must follow the precise correct procedure for prayer. Remember that arrogant believers never get through to the throne of grace.

1Jo 3:22 tells us why some prayers are not answered and that is because believers do not fulfill what the verse says, ***"Furthermore, whatever we have asked, we receive from Him, because we continue to execute His mandates, and we keep on doing what is pleasing in His sight."***

Therefore, prayer is related to your fulfillment of the PPOG and the execution of the Christian way of life. Prayer becomes more and more effective as we execute His mandates.

You can have effective prayer right from the start of your spiritual life if you execute God's commands. However, to become a great prayer warrior demands your daily intake of doctrine and the daily use of the problem-solving devices you have learned. Then you don't depend on others to solve your problems but you handle your own problems from the doctrinal techniques you've been taught.

To do ***"what is pleasing in His sight"*** describes spiritual adulthood when the believer reaches the peak in his prayer life. Therefore, failure to execute His commands and to attain spiritual adulthood ("do what is pleasing in His sight") impedes, obstructs, inhibits, and undermines all effective prayer.

Probably the least known of all reasons for unanswered prayer is malfunction in marriage or lack of domestic tranquility.

1Pe 3:7 ***"Likewise you husbands, live with your wives on the basis of knowledge as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman, and show her respect as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that***

your prayers may not be hindered."

Note that when there is a domestic problem, the husband is not commanded to love but he is commanded to show the woman respect because she is a member of the body of Christ, so that his prayers are not hindered. From this, we can conclude that personal love for people is not a problem-solving device. Only knowledge of doctrine and resultant virtue can solve domestic problems. The woman is a weaker vessel since she is designed by God as a responder.

Being a responder explains why the woman must be under more authority than the man. So failure in your marital life can spill over into failure in your prayer life. And failure in your prayer life simply reflects failure in your spiritual life.

However, of all the categories of sin and carnality which hinder effective prayer, arrogance is the number one cause of failure, not only in prayer, but also in the spiritual life. It is the number one reason why people are not teachable, why people are not flexible, and why people do not profit from suffering. We produce our own arrogance without any help from anyone else, for we all have an old sin nature which daily knocks at the door and says, "How about a little arrogance today?"

Job 35:12-13 ***"They cry out, but He [God] does not answer because of the arrogance of evil men. Surely God will not listen to a phony [empty] prayer [cry], nor will the Almighty regard it."***

Prayer is also not answered because of lust, criminality, jealousy, and false motivation, which neutralize prayer.

Jam 4:2-4 is addressed to believers: ***"You lust and do not have [what you want], so you commit murder. Also, you are jealous and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask [in prayer] and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on pleasures or lusts. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be***

a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The point is that lust and murder, jealousy and fighting are the wrong way to get what you want. And if you ask from wrong motives, you won't get it either. Lust is a wrong motive for prayer. When some believers don't get what they want, they commit murder in frustration, and the failure of their prayer life has resulted in criminality. Remember there are born-again believers who commit murder, like David did. And then there's millions of born again believers who commit murder every day...

1Jo 3:15 *"Everyone who hates his fellow-believer is a murderer;"*

And in Jam 4:2, jealousy is also a wrong motive for prayer.

If you're jealous of your friend or loved one, your relationship will never work because you're constantly trying to bend them to your way. And since you can't obtain through jealousy, you fight and quarrel. Lust and jealousy as wrong motives both come from wanting things for your pleasure. So the whole system of failure in prayer becomes failure in the PPOG.

When the client nation is under the cycles of discipline, prayer for deliverance cannot be answered, Lam 3:44.

This is because the justice of God is going to remove that nation.

Lam 3:44 *"You have covered yourself with a cloud [negative volition] so that no prayer can get through."*

Malfunction of the faith-rest drill in prayer means the malfunction of effective prayer, Mar 11:24.

Mar 11:24 *"I say to you, all things for which you ask and pray, believe that you shall receive them, and you shall be given them."*

With the malfunction of faith-rest drill in prayer, your life eventually malfunctions.

Prayer is an index to your spiritual life. It is something that all believers are commanded to do.

If you're not praying correctly or fail in prayer for any reason, that means there's some problem in your spiritual life; there's some kink, some syndrome, some arrogance.

The problem will overflow to every aspect of your life.

Imprecatory prayers are legal and valid for other dispensations but not for the Church-age believer. Imprecatory prayers are basically found in the Psalms in which the authors call for misfortune and disaster to strike their enemies. They prayed that God would pour out His wrath and righteous judgment upon their foes.

Let's look at some examples of imprecatory psalms.

Psa 35:1-3 "Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; Fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield, And rise up for my help. Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'"

Psa 35:4-8 "Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. Let them be like chaff before the wind, With the angel of the Lord driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the Lord pursuing them. For without cause they hid their net for me; Without cause they dug a pit for my soul. Let destruction come upon him unawares; And let the net which he hid catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall."

Psa 35:26 "Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress; Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me."

Psa 55:15 "Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst."

Psa 58:6-8 "O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out

the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun."

Psa 59:13 "Destroy them in wrath, destroy them, that they may be no more; That men may know that God rules in Jacob, To the ends of the earth. Selah."

Psa 109:6-14 "Appoint a wicked man over him; And let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him come forth guilty; And let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; Let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow. Let his children wander about and beg; And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes. Let the creditor seize all that he has; And let strangers plunder the product of his labor. Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him, Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; In a following generation let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord, And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, That He may cut off their memory from the earth;"

Psa 109:20 "Let this be the reward of my accusers from the Lord, And of those who speak evil against my soul."

Psa 137:7-9 "Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, 'Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation.' O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock."

Psa 140:6-10 "I said to the Lord, Thou art my God; Give ear, O Lord, to the voice of my supplications. O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; Do not promote his evil device, lest they be exalted. Selah. As for the head

of those who surround me, May the mischief of their lips cover them. May burning coals fall upon them; May they be cast into the fire, Into deep pits from which they cannot rise."

We can't pray like this! I mean you can, but the Lord will not hear your prayer!

In contrast to this spirit of retaliation, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that we should love our enemies, Mat 5:43-48. Therefore, imprecatory prayers are not answered by God.

One of the greatest problems related to prayer is **concentration**. All forms of worship are a concentration test. This test can be divided into three categories.

Concentration on the teaching of doctrine. This reflects your values, your motivation, your spiritual condition, and your spiritual status quo. Bible doctrine should have number one priority.

Concentration in the communion service. The communion service is a reflection of the person and work of Christ.

Concentration in your personal and private prayers, during public prayers when others are praying, and in your petitions and intercessions. Prayer is a challenge to concentration.

The pattern of concentration in all forms of worship is established in the function of your perception, metabolization, and application of Bible doctrine.

If you can concentrate on Bible doctrine in time of stress, adversity, or even in time of prosperity, then you can concentrate in prayer.

There is a direct relationship between concentration in Bible study under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and concentration in prayer under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The prayer that could not be answered--our Lord's prayer on the Cross.

Psa 22:1 indicates that the time of this prophecy is the cross.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning [screaming]."

Psa 22:2 states the unanswered prayer, ***"O my God, I cry out by day [first three hours, 9 a.m. - 12 noon] and then by night there is no silence for Me [the continued prayer of our Lord during the darkness that surrounded the cross from 12 noon - 3 p.m. when He was being judged for our sins]."***

Psa 22:3 tells the reason why that prayer could not be answered in one phrase, ***"You are Holy. You who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."***

God the Father was imputing our sins to Christ and judging them from His Holiness. Therefore, He couldn't answer the prayer for deliverance on the cross.

In Psa 22:4-6, Jesus even pointed out to the Father that He had previously delivered Israel under stringent conditions. ***"Our fathers trusted in You [faith-rest]; they trusted, and You delivered them [You answered their prayers]. They cried out to You in prayer and were delivered; they trusted You and were not disappointed."***

So why couldn't our Lord's prayer be answered? The reason is given in Psa 22:6, ***"But I am a worm."***

The Hebrew word for worm, **TOLA**, is not the word for an ordinary worm. This worm was used for red dye in the ancient world. It was crushed in a vat; the blood extracted was used to produce the crimson dye used for the robes of kings and aristocrats.

So the answer, ***"I am a worm,"*** illustrates why His prayer could not be answered. He was being crushed for our sins, so that you and I, as royal family of God, could wear the crimson robe of the royal family forever.

"And I am not a man" means "I am no longer human." As a Hebrew idiom, this phrase portrays the substitutionary saving work of Christ on the cross. And it says He was ***"scorned by men and despised by people."***

Christ was being judged for our sins. Therefore, prayer at that time from the humanity of Christ could not be answered because He was made sin for us.

Psa 22:7 says He was being ridiculed by gesture. ***"All who see Me mock Me; they gesture insults; they keep wagging their heads."***

This was fulfilled in Mat 27:39-40.

Psa 22:8 gives some of the verbal sarcastic abuse of the crowd, fulfilled in Mat 27:39-44. ***"They kept shouting, 'He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him since He delights in Him.'"***

Our Lord's prayer was heard by all who were there, and they saw that it couldn't be answered! But they didn't understand the reason - because He was bearing their sins and our sins in His own body on the cross.

"He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The only prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that could not be answered could not be answered because it was the way of our so-great salvation. He was being judged for our sins; He was our substitute; He was taking our place. During His time on the cross, He could only be judged; and during His judgment His prayer could not be answered. Because our Lord endured this judgment in our place, our access to God in prayer is always available for us.