

PRAYER, GRACE AND TRUST

By John Aldworth

Prayer has changed since our Lord walked this earth. Back then (in the Matthew, Mark, Luke and John period) Jesus told his disciples to “ask anything in my name and I will do it”.

Today by contrast, in the dispensation of the grace of God (Paul’s epistles) we are told to pray with thanksgiving, making our requests known to God and that He will keep our minds and hearts in peace. And we are not necessarily guaranteed the answers we seek. This message explains this difference and outlines the Apostle Paul’s guidelines for prayer. Importantly, prayer under grace is more about thanking God for all He is already doing and has done, than expecting sudden miracles. The focus is also more on praying for the Lord’s work and on praying for others than just making request “for my needs and for me”.

READ **1 Thess. 5:16-25**, then pick up on these KEY POINTS:

- **REJOICE ALWAYS**
Here’s why: 2 Cor. 4:12, 1 Thess. 3:9
- **PRAY WITHOUT CEASING**
Make it a daily, mealtime, bedtime, wake-up practice, giving thanks making your requests known.
- **IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS**
This is indeed the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. There is always much to thank Him for.

CONTRAST **Phil. 4:6** with **John 14:13-14, 16:23** and **Matt. 18:19**:

Phil. 4:6-7: “Be careful for **nothing** but in **everything** by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** make your requests known to God. And the **peace** of God which passeth all understanding shall **keep** your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

John 14:13-14: “And whatsoever ye ask in my name that will I do... if ye ask anything in my name I will do it.”

John 16:23: “Verily, verily, I say unto you whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name He will give it. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive.”

Matt. 18:19: “If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”

BUT

In **2 Cor. 12: 7-9** we find Paul beseeching the Lord three times to remove the “thorn in the flesh” that tormented him. The Lord’s answer: “**My grace is sufficient for thee.**” What happened to the promises from John and Matthew listed above? Answer: They have been replaced by something far better in **grace**.

UNDERSTANDING THE DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE:

- In the John-Matthew promises above, Jesus is talking only to his kingdom-on-earth apostles and disciples – no one else. We Gentiles are not in the audience. These promises were not made to us. In fact they apply only to the saved remnant of Israel then.
- The John-Matthew prayer promises are part of the “Kingdom of Heaven on earth” gospel and programme Jesus ministered as the Son of Man. See **Matt. 4:17, 10:17** to compare this kingdom gospel with Paul’s very different “gospel of the grace of God” in **Acts 20:24**.
- Miraculous answers to prayer are among the “signs” promised to and required by Jews. No such are made to us Gentiles. See **1 Cor. 1:21/22** “Jews require a sign, Greeks seek after wisdom but we preach Christ crucified.”

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM vs. GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD

UNDER THE LAW: **Matt 28:19-20**: “Teaching them (all nations) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” **Matt. 23:2-3**: “All that the scribes and Pharisees bid you do (i.e. the whole law), do.”

UNDER GRACE: **Acts 13:39**: “By Him (the man Christ Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” **Romans 6:14**: “Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace.”

PRAYER IS DIFFERENT UNDER GRACE

For example, under grace we get FAR MORE than we ask for. (Under the Matthew-Mark-Luke and John teachings you mainly get what you ask for).

Eph. 3:20-21: “Now unto Him that is able to do EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us ... Unto Him be glory in the church (which is His Body).

2 Cor. 9:8: “God is able to make ALL GRACE ABOUND unto you that ye having ALL SUFFICIENCY in ALL things may ABOUND unto every good work.”

Yes, since grace abounds we should also abound in serving the Lord. It would be less than love, indeed gross ingratitude, simply to enjoy God’s good blessings and ignore His call on our lives to server Him and tells others about the Son’s death for their sin and the Father’s grace for their lives.

WHY WE DON’T KNOW HOW TO PRAY

Rom. 8:26 says: “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities for we know what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”

What we should pray for are the things that God can do “exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think” (see **Eph. 3:20-21** above) but since they are beyond what we think

we don't pray for them. Remember when you're praying that God always has something far better for you than know or can ask for. Ask Him to show what it might be. Expect to be wonderfully surprised.

KEYS TO PRAYER UNDER GRACE

- ALWAYS GIVE THANKS
Study **1 Thess. 3:9, 1 Cor. 1:4, 2 Cor. 4:15**. Give thanks always for all the blessings already received, especially on others. Thank God for his continuing care and love. Thank Him for the good things He's going to do that you can't even imagine.
- PRAY AND TRUST
See **2 Cor. 3-4, 2 Cor. 1:9-10**. . With prayer we should also trust God to meet our needs, keep us in grace, and do more than we can think or expect for our good - our good both in this life and that to come, that is. This is why sometimes we suffer and answers to prayer seem delayed, all so that we may learn to put greater trust in God.
- PRAY ALWAYS, INSTANTLY
Rom. 12:12: "Continuing instant in prayer." Don't wait to pray. Pray as soon as needs, opportunities or thoughts of what more God can do occur. Paul prayed continually and day and night.
- PRAY FOR OTHERS
Col. 1:3: Pray for God's work in other people's lives. Pray for the Body of Christ, pray for wider preaching of the gospel, pray for more of God's truth and grace to be realised in believer's lives. Pray for ministers. Paul's prayers were for the saints, not himself.
- PRAY AND ACT WITH HOPE, EXPECTATION AND BOLDNESS
Phil. 1:20. Prayer is also expecting through God's grace to rightly serve Him, not be ashamed and see results from gospel sharing.
- HAVING PRAYED – GET ON WITH IT
Taking steps in faith and in real action should follow prayer. While often we have to wait patiently for results, there are times when we have to "walk the talk" – that is act out in real life our belief that God will take care of our needs and the problems we have committed to Him. For example, read how Moses was told by God to quit praying and just move Israel out into the water when they were jammed against the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army coming up fast behind. See **Exodus 14:9-15**.

Above all rest in the peace God gives your heart when you have prayed about a matter. If there is no peace it may mean you need to pray or do something. Or perhaps there is another matter you have not taken to God in prayer.

When you have prayed, trusted and done all you need to do His peace will be there and, no matter the problem, you can rest in it.