

# Bible Lessons



*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*

—Ephesians 6:18

**Volume 55, No. 2**  
**April • May • June**  
**2023**

*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 55

April • May • June

No. 2

## Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Apr 2	Prayers of Repentance .....	1
Apr 9	Prayers of Thanksgiving and Praise.....	6
Apr 16	Elijah’s Prayers .....	11
Apr 23	Intercessory Prayers.....	16
Apr 30	Job’s Prayer/Jesus’ Prayer .....	23
May 7	Daniel’s Fast and Prayer .....	28
May 14	Prayer of Jabez.....	32
May 21	Prayers of Hannah and Zechariah.....	36
May 28	Hezekiah’s Prayer and Letter.....	42
Jun 4	Jacob’s Wrestling Match .....	48
Jun 11	Touching the Hem of Jesus’ Garment .....	52
Jun 18	Lord, Teach us to Pray.....	56
Jun 25	If My People.....	60

*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
In this issue, Reflections are contributed by: Paul Phillips, Tavis Browne,  
Jeremy Booher, E.E. Gracey, Harlan Sorrell, Serena Johnson, Eric Doolittle,  
Diane Doolittle, Doris Clay, Phillip Gellenbeck, Ron Cole, Maxine Busbee,  
Sarah Herron*

### NOTICE

The Bible Lessons are published by CHURCH OF GOD TODAY  
**Phone: (859) 319-9721. (Please leave text or voice message.)**

Lessons are available free of charge online at  
<[www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/bible-lessons/](http://www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/bible-lessons/)>  
and can be downloaded for printing in booklet or other format.

If you would like printed copies mailed to you, please contact  
Bro. Kevin Sorrell, 5722 S Sooner Rd, Guthrie, OK 73044

**Phone (405)-414-8646**

## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 2nd QUARTER, 2023

### PRAYER

Prayer is the cable that connects us to our anchor of faith. Prayer is also our direct “hot line” to God, our Heavenly Father. He is already listening on the other end of the line, waiting for us to reach out to him.

Without prayer, we would soon be adrift on the sea of despair. Perhaps this is why God made prayer as natural as breathing. The devil constantly tries to confuse, hinder, and discourage us in prayer, but we must persevere tenaciously and keep at it. God **does** hear our prayer, and he **will** answer, according as he sees is the very best for us and for all concerned.

Prayer can be as spontaneous as laughter or as deliberate as the plodding ox. Prayer can be as loud as a trumpet or a mere whisper or sigh. A prayer can be a millisecond long or it can stretch on for many years. The only real limitation to prayer is when we fail to pray.

Our prayers take on a multitude of roles throughout our lifetimes: We pray to God for forgiveness; we intercede in prayer for the multitude of needs we see around us; we pray for guidance, comfort, protection, help in getting something done, temporal needs, etc. Thanksgiving and praise are part of our prayer repertoire also.

*Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*—Hosea 14:2

—Bro. Clifford Cole

### APRIL 2, 2023

#### PRAYERS OF REPENTANCE – DAVID, TWO MEN IN THE TEMPLE, AND THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

**Psalm 51:1** To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

**Luke 18:9** And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

**Luke 23:39** And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou

comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

—Psalm 51:17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** David, the publican, and the thief on the cross acknowledged that they were in desperate need of forgiveness. Their free and full admission of guilt, coupled with God’s desire to see them free from their sins, brought forgiveness. The Pharisee, and the other thief on the cross, disdained the idea of asking for forgiveness and missed out on the greatest blessing possible – salvation.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 51:7 “**Purge me with hyssop**”: David was likely referring to the use of hyssop (an herb in the mint family) that was used in conjunction with the offering of two clean birds, cedar wood, and scarlet, in the ritual performed for someone healed of leprosy. The ceremony consisted of dipping hyssop in the blood of the two clean birds and sprinkling it over the person healed of leprosy as a testimony that they were now clear of the disease.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

David’s sin with Bathsheba was like many other sins – it did not sneak up on him all at once. First, he was not where he should have been at the time the temptation arose. Secondly, he did not resist and flee the temptation, but rather inquired as to who the young lady was. When he learned she was Bathsheba, he didn’t leave well enough alone but sent messengers to bring her to him, even though he knew she was the wife of Uriah, one of his friends. We are familiar with the rest of the story. Uriah proved to be an extremely honorable man, which foiled David’s attempts to cover his sin. This ultimately led to Uriah’s untimely death. God held David responsible for Uriah’s death, as well as his sin with Bathsheba.

Somehow, David convinced himself that having Uriah killed took care of his problem; but covering one's sin with another sin never works the way the devil says it will. Thankfully, when confronted with the fact that he was indeed guilty, David did the right thing at last and said, "I have sinned against the LORD."

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. How did sin affect David, based on what we read in Psalms 51?
2. How much was David's sin on his mind?
3. What did David admit to when he confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness?
4. How thoroughly did David wish to be cleansed?
5. Would David have received forgiveness if he had not been completely transparent and sincere in his repentance?
6. What did David ask from God, besides forgiveness?
7. What did Jesus mean when he said, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself"?
8. Of what eternal value were all the good things the Pharisee bragged about?
9. The publican's prayer was short, and to the point. How effective was it?
10. What great revelation came to the thief that asked Jesus to remember him when He came into his kingdom?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). Perhaps he recognized this fact to some degree before, but his sin with Bathsheba, and the cascade of events afterward brought it all to laser focus. Neither could he remove it from the forefront of his thoughts. "My sin is ever before me" (Psalms 51:3b). In sharp contrast, David's predecessor, Saul, developed the habit of blaming others for his wrongdoing. Saul never repented with his whole heart when confronted with his misdeeds.

Peter's great failure brought him to the point where he "went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). Judas, on the other hand, "repented [to] himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned..., cast down the

pieces of silver...., and went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:3-5).

Why did Peter find repentance, yet Judas chose to throw away all hope? They both came to the full end of their own efforts, resulting in deep grief for them both. Peter obtained deliverance through repentance, but Judas sought relief by taking his own life. What made the difference between the two? Prayer. Peter sought to make things right by repenting and asking God for forgiveness, while Judas tried to make things right by returning the money in a futile attempt to undo the great wrong, he had done.

There is a common thread among all who sin yet obtain forgiveness for their sins. They acknowledge their sins, confess them, ask for forgiveness, and then forsake them. On the other hand, those who come to the realization that they have sinned, feel bad about it yet find no repentance. David and Peter are examples of the first group; King Saul and Judas represent the latter category.

We live in the flesh and contend with the flesh, yet we are “more than conquerors” through the blood of Jesus and the power of the infilling of the Holy Spirit! My personal testimony is that the battles of sanctification come in stages, or levels. While in my teens, it seemed that nothing could be more difficult than the present battle. As a young husband and father, other battles came my way, each one a little more difficult than the last. As I have grown older, the battles have continued accordingly. Many times, these major battles feel like they have the potential to sweep me away, yet God always helps me. Have I made mistakes in my battles? Absolutely yes. My heart, though, has been to serve God. When I have failed, I have asked for forgiveness and power to go on, as well as for wisdom to learn from my mistakes. In retrospect, I am very thankful that the Lord did not allow my battles to come in reverse order. I have never been tested beyond what God’s power would help me to overcome! He has helped me to “grow in grace” and to go from “faith to faith.” Praise God!!

*“Dear Heavenly Father, I understand your plan is for me to live free from sin. Should I stumble, though, please help me to remember I can’t fix my mistakes and failures by my own efforts and wisdom! Help me, rather, to always come to you frankly and honestly, admitting where I fell short. If I need your forgiveness, help me to ask for that. Help me to not hide from any of my failures, to ignore them, or to seek to patch up shortcomings in my own way. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

David lived in a different era than the two thieves. Yet the parable of the Pharisee and Publican illustrates a vital commonality between the examples in our lesson. This commonality exists for every soul that finds true repentance and forgiveness from God. One who prays a prayer of acknowledgement of sin with conviction and true humility, seeking God for mercy, will find true repentance. Anything less will result in a miscarriage of pride, self-worth, and eternal loss.

True repentance comes because of a work in the heart. This fact is as true today as in David's time. Consider the examples of the lesson and the possible counterparts in comparison. There was David versus King Saul, the Pharisee and Publican, and the two thieves on their crosses. One would allow a work of humility, acknowledgement of sin, acceptance of God's judgement, and their need of mercy to influence their approach to God. An approach of this nature leads us to the blessing we so desperately need. Without the heart being engaged in prayer, the effort to obtain repentance will be unsuccessful.

How many of us have had the experience of doing chores at home but our heart wasn't involved? Did it take longer to complete the task than it should have? Did we get into more trouble with our parents than was necessary? When we failed to make the proper effort, the results proved to be less than stellar.

Without heart work, the effort expended towards true repentance will not meet God's standard.

—Bro. Paul Phillips

**APRIL 9, 2023**

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

**1Samuel 2:1** And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

*2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*



3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD *is* a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

5 *They that were* full have hired out themselves for bread; and *they that were* hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

**Psalm 103:1** Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *ble*ss his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; *so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

**MEMORY VERSE:** O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he* is good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. –Psalm 107:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The LORD is **truly** worthy of all our praise and thanksgiving. When we begin to think of all God has done for us, the list soon becomes overwhelming. “What a mighty God we serve!” (ELS #43)

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 103:12 “**As far as the east is from the west**”: Since there are only north and south poles, and no east or west poles, it is possible to travel from the east or west until time ends. When we stand on the North pole, stepping in any direction will point us southward. Similarly, stepping off the South pole in any direction will cause us to head north.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Hannah’s prayer of thanksgiving was preceded by her anguish-filled prayer for a son. Hannah’s husband, while troubled by her grief, offered her little consolation. Hannah’s co-wife, the adversary she may have been referencing in her prayer of thanksgiving, had given her constant agitation for quite some time. Eli, the high priest, had

accused her of being drunk while praying for a son in the court of the tabernacle. It's little wonder that Hannah burst forth with praise when God answered her prayer and gave her a son!

David's prayer of thanksgiving touches on so many points. He went through years of almost constant testing and turmoil before he ascended to the throne of Israel. However, the LORD delivered him out of all his troubles because he put his whole trust in Him. When David came against situations that appeared hopeless, he turned to the God of all hope and always got the help he needed. When he stumbled and failed, he turned to the LORD for forgiveness and mercy. David often needed courage, wisdom, and grace far beyond human capability, but the LORD always granted him his heart's desire. David learned to ask, God always answered, and David remembered to praise his God!

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Hannah's husband, Elkanah, had two wives. Why do we not have recorded any prayers of thanksgiving by the other wife?
2. When we take something for granted, is it easy to feel "entitled" rather than thankful? Why or why not?
3. David blessed the LORD for all His benefits. What are some of these benefits?
4. Of all the benefits the LORD grants us, how many of them can we bestow upon ourselves?
5. Thankfulness for forgiveness was at the top of David's list. How much does anything else really matter if we haven't been forgiven of our sins?
6. How do you think God regards an unthankful and grumbling prayer?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

How pleasant it is to hear the words "thank you!" When someone thanks us for something, it almost makes us want to do it again, just to hear those two special words.

At the time of this writing, I am texting back and forth with a young man, Spencer, a former classmate of our middle daughter. Spencer has done yard work for us in the past. He is now terminally ill.

Despite his pain and lack of energy, Spencer is maintaining a good attitude toward God and his illness. He expresses such thankfulness for all God is doing for him and his young family and is finding peace through thankfulness. It's wonderful to witness someone going through what he is suffering, yet doing it through God-given grace. God loves to help the grateful!

Several secular studies have found that an attitude of thankfulness not only blesses the recipients of gratitude, but it also helps the one who is grateful. Our relationship with God is blessed by expressing thanks; our marriages flourish; other family relationships are enhanced; neighbors become "good neighbors," and work environments improve. Physical health, mental well-being, and most importantly, our spiritual health is helped tremendously by thanksgiving.

*"Heavenly Father, thank you for being you! **Thank you** for all your provision – soul, mind, and body. Dear Lord, I'm so thankful you know what is best for me and for everyone else in this whole, wide world. Help me to remain thankful and trusting, and all will be well. Amen!"*

## REFLECTIONS

Thanksgiving and praise during difficult trials and tests of our lives help take our minds off our circumstances. Hannah and David are examples of this. When their focus changed from their situations to thanksgiving, God worked in their behalf. He will do the same for us. He is no respecter of persons. We are encouraged in God's word to, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Always having a prayer of thanksgiving and/or praise on our lips and in our hearts and minds is one way to help fulfill this scripture. God has done so much for us we cannot praise and thank him enough. The songwriter said, "If I had ten thousand lives in which to praise Him, I could not enough my blessed Lord adore" (ELS #46). Lord, help us all to make that same attempt toward praise and adoration with the one life HE has given us. I have been challenged from time to time to have prayers of only thanksgiving and praise to God. I try not to ask or request anything from God. I find myself having to be very careful and not sneak in a request. I challenge each of you to try this as well, as the Lord leads.

–Bro. Tavis Browne

APRIL 16, 2023

**ELIJAH'S PRAYERS – FIRE FROM HEAVEN; CLOUD THE SIZE OF A  
MAN'S HAND; "LORD, LET ME DIE"**

**1 Kings 18:27** And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have* done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt

sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

**1Kings 19:1** And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

3 And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

—James 5:17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** It's not often that we can find such stellar examples of three types of prayer all in a row in the Bible, but Elijah's prayers certainly qualify. His first prayer was one of importunity for God's people to return to Him. The second prayer was for God to show mercy and send a much-needed rain. The third prayer is one for himself, at a time when he was literally at the end of his road.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

1Kings 18:35 **"And the water ran round about the altar"**: An ancient writer revealed that priests of false gods would sometimes conceal fire under their alters, with funnels directed upwards toward the sacrifice, thus enabling the hidden fire to start a blaze on the sacrifice. Elijah's great effort in saturating the sacrifice was to prove that the fire that would come down from heaven was genuine and not a trick. (*Condensed from Adam Clarke*)

1Kings 18:46 **"And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."**: God gave Elijah the strength and determination to run ahead of Ahab's chariot horses, a distance of at least 16 miles. (Albert Barnes) Other sources state that the distance could have been between 20 and 25 miles, as the crow flies. Some say that the top speed of a chariot can be as much as 35 miles an hour. Ahab probably pushed his horses for all they had, trying to beat the deluge chasing him.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Israel had all but lost sight of the LORD, the one that had brought them to the land of Canaan 545 years earlier. The LORD told Elijah to show himself to king Ahab and to call the people together to Mount Carmel. Elijah was instructed to allow the priests of Baal to attempt to cause fire to come down and consume their sacrifice. After their

efforts failed miserably, Elijah prayed. The fire of heaven fell and mightily convinced the people that the LORD was the God of heaven and earth and ought to be feared as such.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How is it that the gods of this world make such mockery of their worshipers, just as Baal did?
2. What are some of the gods today that are in league with Baal?
3. What did Elijah do to nullify any claim he had cheated when fire from heaven consumed the sacrifice?
4. What impression would it make on folks today to witness what the people of Israel did when fire from heaven came down? Do you think very many would turn to God?
5. How long was Elijah's prayer asking to prove Himself to the people?
6. How important is it to prepare our hearts to pray—before we actually pray?
7. Why didn't God answer Elijah's prayer the first time he prayed for rain?
8. When we know we need to pray for something important, how many times do we allow ourselves to pray before God answers?
9. What could be the reason Elijah became so discouraged after he had seen the miracles of fire coming down from heaven and then after witnessing God sending rain?
10. Did God cut Elijah off for wanting to die?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

What a blessing it is that we serve the One who knows what we need, even when we have difficulty understanding the problem. In contrast, Baal and all the other false gods neither hear, care, nor have any power to answer a single prayer! Elijah had all confidence God would hear him when he prayed for fire to come down from heaven. The LORD told him what to do, and Elijah knew God would come through.

The Lord has different ways of answering our prayers. He can



answer quickly – sometimes even instantly. At other times, it seems like we pray and pray without an answer in sight. Elijah’s first two prayers in our reading today are good examples of this. All Elijah had to pray was a few words before fire fell from Heaven. Imagine the people’s reaction if Elijah would have had to pray for hours on end with no result? God knew what was best.

Elijah’s prayer for rain, however, was different. Elijah knew that he needed to pray for rain and may have even thought that all he had to do was utter a few words before the rain fell. Considering the circumstances of this prayer, however, we begin to see a few differences. Elijah and his servant were the only ones that heard the prayer for rain since they were alone on a hilltop. Secondly, it could be that the LORD wanted to gently remind Elijah that he was not a vending machine. Sometimes it takes persistence on our part to hang on for however long it takes to have our prayer answered.

Later, when Elijah ran from Jezebel, he prayed that God would take him on home to heaven. He was tired and at the end of his emotional and physical road. He had put up with the antics of Baal’s priests for most of a day and then had the adrenalin rush of seeing fire come down from heaven to lick up the sacrifice when he prayed. Next, he killed the 450 priests of Baal, then climbed a hill to pray for rain - seven times. Next, he ran 16 or more miles ahead of Ahab’s chariot – at speeds most humans never dream of running. Elijah was an old man and may have been feeling a few aches and pains after his rigorous day. I don’t know how much he ate during this time, but give any man this much to do in short order–without a lot of nourishment, or rest–and then tell him the queen is going to have him dead within 24 hours.

The LORD knew Ahab’s physical and emotional limitations. He knows ours. God provided for Elijah by sending an angel to cook him two special meals that sustained him for his forty-day trek to get alone with God. God is no respecter of persons. He loves each one of us as much as he did Elijah. He will take care of us. He will answer our prayers.

*“Lord, help me to pray. When the answer comes quickly may I say Amen, thank the Lord! When I must pray much longer, help me to hold on until you say “Yes, or No, or Wait!” When I’m tired or simply feeling faint of heart, help me to pray anyway. I know you will understand me, just as you understood Elijah.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Since we are confident in God's love and faithfulness, let's continue praying as many times as needed until we see a token of the answer "coming out of the sea," even if it is only the size of a man's hand. Just as Elijah first rebuilt the altar of God that had been broken down, so we must purge our hearts and minds of all earthly aspirations, cares, and the pride of life, which all hinder our prayers for the salvation of souls. Once our heart's altar is pleasing to the Lord, our prayers will avail even more when they are joined with others of God's holy people. Elijah prayed at the same time of the evening sacrifice in Jerusalem, a passionate prayer that backsliding Israel would feel the powerful change of God's righteousness in their hearts, a prayer that God answered.

Elijah's request to die is his only prayer that God never answered. Just as God rejuvenated Elijah's spirit and gave him renewed purpose and courage with HIS still small voice, so He will do for us in our low times. Elijah spent another twenty-three years tutoring and inspiring great devotion, faith, and miracles in Elisha, which culminated in Elisha obtaining a double portion of Elijah's spirit. God help us to acquire the spirit and power of Elijah that impassions us to step out to defend Christ's kingdom and to salvage the deluded souls of our culture. "Lord, raise up troublers to our wicked culture, whose prayers and bold stand for Christ will check the advance of satan's destruction of our people."

—Bro Jeremy Booher

**APRIL 23, 2023**

### **INTERCESSORY PRAYERS OF ABRAHAM, MOSES, JESUS, AND STEPHEN**

**Genesis 18:22** And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou

also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy *it*.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30 And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

**Exodus 32:7** And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought

forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

**Exodus 32:31** And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

**Luke 23:34** Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

**Acts 7:54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. –Acts 7:60

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The intercessory prayers of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Stephen were not self-centered. Rather, their prayers were sacrificial in nature. Abraham could have held a grudge against Lot regarding the choice Lot made in dividing the land. Moses offered to take the people’s punishment rather than see the LORD destroy them. Jesus reminded His Father, “They know not what they do.” Stephen prayed, “Lay not this sin to their charge.”

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Exodus 32:32b **“Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”**: The book was most likely the register, or else it was the roll call of all the families God told Moses to keep. Those who broke covenant with God would be blotted out of the roll call and would not gain an inheritance in the Promised Land. Moses told the LORD he would rather not have an inheritance in the land of Canaan if everyone else was going to miss out.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Twenty years had passed from the time Lot had chosen the lush grazing lands leading toward Sodom and Gomorrah, leaving Abraham the barren part. Within five years, Lot got into trouble when five neighboring kings “took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah...” along with “Lot, who dwelt in Sodom, and all his goods.” Abraham and his armed servants rescued Lot, his family, and recovered all of the stolen goods.

Now Lot was in trouble again. The LORD told Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom. Following the same pattern as before, Abraham once again interceded for Lot, pleading for God to spare Sodom if there were but ten righteous people living there.

It is doubtful the people appreciated the fact that Moses fasted for forty days while communing with God and then receiving the Ten Commandments. Their reaction to Moses’ extended absence was to tell Aaron he should make them gods to lead them. God saw their

abomination and almost did away with them then and there. If it hadn't been for Moses standing between God's wrath and the people, the rest of history would be radically different.

Jesus had already endured the agony of His prayer in the garden, sweating as great drops of blood. Just as He finished praying, Judas, with his pretentious kiss, and a band of soldiers arrived. . Next came the mockery of the sham trial, a brutal beating, and the crown of thorns thrust down on His head. Peter, when feeling cornered, had denied Jesus three times. While hanging on the cross, Jesus felt utterly forsaken by His Heavenly Father. He cried, "Father, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" After all of this, Jesus still prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Stephen, the first martyr, preached a fiery sermon to a hostile audience. It was not well received. When Stephen's final moments on this earth came, he spent it praying for those who had treated him so unfairly. Just before he took his last breath, "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What kind of feelings do you think Abraham had toward Lot for taking the best of the land, when given the chance to choose?
2. When the LORD informed Abraham of His intentions to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked if He would spare the city for the sake of a few righteous. How could Abraham regard Lot as righteous when He had taken the best of the land?
3. What does Abraham's outlook teach us about forgiveness, forbearance, and intercession?
4. When Moses was told by God that the people had sinned, he interceded for the people, begging the LORD to not destroy them. However, a little while later, Moses threw down the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments when he saw firsthand what the people were doing in their revelry. Why, then, did Moses still pray again for the LORD to forgive the people?
5. God told Moses he was going to start all over with His children. Why didn't Moses go along with this?
6. How sacrificial were Abraham and Moses really being in their intercessory prayers?

7. Why couldn't Abraham and Moses "just leave well enough alone," and allow God to do what He said He was going to do?
8. Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from a painful death. Instead, He prayed for us while He died. How is it that intercession is sometimes so painful, even for us today, to some degree?
9. Stephen thought of those stoning him in the most loving way possible by asking God to not lay it to their charge. How could Stephen possibly have this attitude?
10. How effective were these four intercessory prayers?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

It's hard to think of a better definition of love, than an intercessory prayer for an enemy, or for someone who has mistreated us. Someone once said, "To err is human, but to forgive is divine!" It takes a divine love to forgive and then to intercede for the one that was forgiven.

The opportunity to change history in big ways is waiting for those who choose to forgive and then to intercede. How did Abraham forgiving, and then interceding for Lot directly, affect us? Primarily through the fact that if he had not forgiven, he might not have found God's forgiveness when he needed it desperately. Looking at the timeline of events, Abraham pleaded for Lot in Genesis 18. In Genesis 20, Abraham claimed his wife Sarah as his sister for the second time. God has a hard time forgiving someone who fails to forgive others. I must wonder how it would have gone with Abraham, after claiming Sarah as his sister, if he had not first forgiven and then interceded for Lot in prayer.

If Moses had let God do what He said he would do without interceding for the people, Moses would have become the father of a new nation. He would have, however, been about as outnumbered as Abraham had been while he lived in Canaan years before. The LORD may have had to wait until his new "chosen people" had multiplied over several hundred years, before they would have been truly ready to inherit the land and to properly occupy it. Meanwhile, the evil that had grown up in Canaan would have gotten even more out of hand.

If Jesus had called the angels of Heaven to deliver Him from the cross, the whole world may have come into judgment at that time. If, however, the end of time had been postponed for a short while, the course of history from that point on to the end would be unimaginably different. Words simply fail. Praise God, Jesus went all the way through, and interceded for you and me!

Stephen, as his last act on earth, prayed for those taking his life. If he hadn't done so, would Saul of Tarsus have found mercy later? It's hard to tell, but, thankfully, we don't have to worry about it. Saul did find grace. We are so thankful for what the Lord did through Paul's ministry, and through his writings that have proven to be such a treasure down through the centuries.

*"Lord, even if I can't comprehend the full end of it all, help me to forgive those who may hurt me, and help me to intercede in prayer for them. Given the examples set before me, I know that only good can come if I do intercede in prayer. Lord, please help me to do my part! Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

What a wonderful thing it is to enter into intercessory prayer; when one is so touched in prayer that it becomes a heart cry — to realize that you are tugging at the great heart of God, even as Sister Hannah of old prayed. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." And He *is* touched. As the song says, "His children more He surely loves, their cry His heart with pity moves: Tho' thorns bestrew the path we've trod, He whispers still, 'Have faith in God.'"

The frightful thing is, "their cry His heart with pity moves." It may be moved whether we are praying in the will of God or not. The word says, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." (Psalm 106:15)

I'm reminded of an experience I had long ago as a little boy, eight to ten years of age. It was wintertime and we were snowed in so badly that the snowplows had not come through. I tried to help my dad start his big Minneapolis Moline tractor, and after he got it started, he and my two older brothers were going into town. I wanted to go. I *had* to go. My dad said, "No," at least three times, then he gave in and let me go. It was an exciting ride that I yet



remember today. As we plowed our way through the deep snow, the tractor would bottom out and spin and we would back up and go at it again. Town was about three miles away, but we made it. When we got to the store, I was so cold I just wanted to stay on the tractor. I went in to warm up, but there seemed to be no heat in there at all. I do not remember the trip back home. When we arrived, everyone enjoyed the goodies and food we had brought. I was so cold my only thought was to get warm, but I dared not tell my parents. I had experienced cold before, where you warm your hands up and they hurt, but this was different - much deeper. I must have hurt for three days. Whether I had frost bite, or how close I came to it, I don't know, but looking back now, I can comprehend the difference the cold would have on a child versus a man, which is something my father knew. I received what I wanted, but it was detrimental to me.

Let us not forget that there are lines that can be crossed. We may get what we want but to our own hurt. Let us stay within the bounds of the Word. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27).

—Bro E.E. Gracey

**APRIL 30, 2023**

**JOB'S PRAYER / JESUS' PRAYER AT GETHSEMANE**

**Job 23:1** Then Job answered and said,

2 Even to day *is* my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

3 Oh that I knew where I might find him! *that* I might come *even* to his seat!

4 I would order *my* cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know the words *which* he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

6 Will he plead against me with *his* great power? No; but he would put *strength* in me.

7 There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be

delivered for ever from my judge.

8 Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him*: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see *him*:

10 But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

**Mark 14:32** And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?

38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak.

39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hand of sinners.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 22:44 **“His sweat was as it were great drops of blood”**: There are a few rare cases recorded of individuals in such extreme anguish as to cause them to perspire with red sweat (*Adam Clarke*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Before Job's great losses, he was a wealthy, happy, and honored man. Seemingly, however, every bit of these three categories were stripped from him in short order. Job could not feel God anywhere in his calamity. He prayed anyway, out of the anguish of his heart. God heard Job's prayer, as we now know, and blessed him in the end.

Jesus "had it all" as the Son of God, before he appeared on earth as a helpless infant, born in apparent poverty and disadvantage. It was an uphill battle all the way from the day of His mortal conception to his dying breath on the cross. Yet He prayed, despite the full range and scope of human feelings He experienced. Knowing what was at stake, Jesus prayed through every one of His human emotions for the benefit of your soul and for mine.

Christ's prayer in the garden, as told in our memory verse, caused His sweat to appear as "great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It mattered not that Jesus was the Son of God, He still had to press against the flesh to persevere in prayer. We will too—but, oh the joy when we do!

### DISCUSSION:

1. Instead of giving in and giving up, what did Job do? What was the result?
2. When Job reached the point of throwing himself recklessly on God's love, power, and provision, what conclusion was he able to come to in his own mind?
3. Jesus, having foreknowledge of heaven, hell, and eternity, still had very powerful human emotions. How was this evident?
4. What would have been the result if Jesus had decided the pain wasn't worth it, and He would have "found an easier way"?
5. Because Jesus endured the suffering leading up to and through His crucifixion, what did He gain? What did we gain?
6. Do we always know what we stand to lose if we don't pray? Do we always know what we will gain if we do pray?
7. What is one big secret we can share with folks that would enable them to keep on praying, even if they don't feel like it?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION:

John Capes, a British submariner in WWII, was dozing in his makeshift bunk, an old torpedo tube, the night of December 6, 1941, when the sub was rocked by a violent explosion. They had hit a mine, as they eased along on the surface, recharging their batteries. The gaping wound in the side of the vessel let in enough water that the sub sank rapidly. John crawled out of his bunk as water poured into the engine room he had been sleeping in.

The door to the engine room would not budge when John tried to open it. The water pressure from the sea rushing into the sub had effectively sealed the door. There was only one remaining way out—the escape hatch. Fortunately, the escape hatch had not been welded shut in this sub, the HMS Perseus, as had been ordered by the Royal Navy. Her skipper had decided he would leave it bolted instead of permanently welding it closed. John somehow found a flashlight, then grabbed an arm full of Davis Submarine Escape Apparatuses for himself and anyone else he might be able to help through the hatch.

John tried frantically to get the hatch open, but it wouldn't budge either, once again due to the tremendous pressure on the other side of the door. After opening a sluice valve, he flooded the engine compartment enough to help equalize the pressure, allowing the escape hatch to open. John helped the only three survivors he could find by fitting them with a breathing apparatus, then pushing them through the open hatch, before he slid through himself.

According to the gauge John spotted moments before exiting, the depth the sub had now sunk to, 270 feet was about 170 feet beyond what the breathing apparatuses were rated for, but it was their only hope. John frantically swam toward the faint glow of the moon shining down through the depths. Realizing he had to slow his ascent to avoid the bends, John then began to grow dizzy, and almost faded into unconsciousness. Miraculously, John broke through the surface at long last, where the cold air helped revive him. Not being able to locate the three crewmates he had helped, John began his long, cold swim towards the white cliffs he could see illuminated in the distance. The rebreather he had used to breath by now served as a flotation device, aiding his efforts to make shore.

Local Greek fishermen found John the next morning. They risked their lives and hid John for over seventeen months before he was rescued by the Royal Navy. John was the only survivor in the unfortunate accident.

No one could bring themselves to believe the fantastic tale John told. He was finally awarded for his bravery, but he died over forty years later with the knowledge that he was still regarded with skepticism. After his death, however, divers located the sub, and found everything to be as John had described during his various debriefings and interviews. His story really was true. They realized that the used torpedo tube he had been sleeping in was probably what saved him from injury, while everyone else was either killed instantly, or injured so severely they could not escape.

What if John had not persisted in opening the escape hatch, despite all the difficulties he went through in getting it open? Intentionally flooding the engine compartment to help equalize the pressure, seemed counterintuitive, yet it was the only way and it worked. Praying through our difficulties can often seem just as backward, especially when it goes directly against the way we are feeling or thinking. If we persist, though, the very thing that seems the most difficult will prove to be our salvation – prayer.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to be faithful in persistent prayer, despite what I feel like in the moment. Even if it seems “this will kill me,” help me to keep on. I know, in the end, it will save me – now, and for eternity. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

“There are some striking passages of Scripture which make it abundantly clear that in the unseen world there is a daily and intense battle for supremacy (Dan. 10:12-21). That is the foremost reason why prayer may be difficult. THE DEVIL OPPOSES IT! Make no mistake about it, the devil knows when a man is really praying effectually, and he does his best to stop him.

“Prayer will be hindered and assailed from all quarters. Who has not gone apart to pray and found their mind go a perfect blank, or flooded with unholy and distracting thoughts if, on the other hand, they have not fallen asleep? Again, it is surprising what a lot of things you remember you have to do when you decide to get away to

pray.

“No kind of effective praying is left unopposed, and thousands could testify that all sorts of unwelcome things are constantly happening to make real prayer impossible. It simply is that the devil ceaselessly conspires to ‘slay’ the spirit and atmosphere of prayer, and until this is recognized and he is resisted, many problems in relation to praying will remain unsolved.

“A godly man said this to me: ‘We live in the country, and have family prayer every day, but try as I will to guard that time, you would be surprised what a task it is to keep it free. Something is always happening to prevent us praying, to shorten the prayer time, or make it difficult to pray when we get down to it.’

“Here and there we find souls so eager to pray they wear themselves out in battle, but with most of us, there is a grave shortage. If we understand the wide range of administrative power that prayer offers, we should pursue it to its limits and press the battle to the gates.

“Let us remember that talking and writing about prayer is not praying. The devil does not care how much we discuss and applaud the subject, so long as we do not pray. A book on how to pray is good, but *the best and only way to learn is to do it.*”

– Excerpted from *Whom Resist*, by F. J. Perryman

– Submitted by Harlan Sorrell

**MAY 7, 2023**

### **DANIEL’S FAST AND PRAYER**

**Daniel 10:1** In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing *was* true, but the time appointed *was* long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which *is* Hiddekel;

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

6 His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

—Isaiah 65:24

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Daniel was in mourning, most likely because of what the LORD had revealed recently to him. During this mourning period, Daniel abstained from pleasant bread, and was in an attitude of prayer much of the time. After about three weeks of mourning,

and praying, the LORD appeared to Daniel in a vision. This put Daniel into a state of great quaking and reverence. The LORD's reassurance, though, was that his prayer had been heard from the start. The prince of the kingdom of Persia had withstood or hindered the LORD's purpose for the three weeks leading up to Daniel's vision, but this difficulty had been overcome. The LORD then revealed what was to befall Daniel's people in the latter days.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 10:3 **"I ate no pleasant bread"**: Daniel abstained from all delicate and good-tasting food, choosing, rather, to eat only the coarsest of foods, and only enough to sustain life. (*Condensed from Albert Barned, Adam Clarke, and Matthew Henry*)

Daniel 10:5 **"Behold a certain man"**: Christ himself (*Matthew Henry*) or the angel Gabriel (*Adam Clarke*)

Daniel 10:13 **"Prince of the kingdom of Persia"**: most likely Cyrus. Cyrus was the one God had destined to allow the Jews to go back to their homeland, but he may have resisted for a time, thus creating the battle Daniel had been praying about. (*Adam Clarke*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

About sixty-nine years had gone by since Daniel and his friends had been led away captive from Jerusalem. Daniel was greatly burdened for his people and for the fulfillment of the 70 prescribed years to come to a full end. The revelation to Daniel of God's purpose for the Jew's in captivity came at just the right time – not too early, and not too late.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Daniel had a great revelation from the LORD. Did it make him feel important and proud? What was the overwhelming feeling that came over him?
2. Why did the LORD give such an important revelation to Daniel?
3. Why would God help us understand something serious today?
4. What was the result of Daniel fasting pleasant things, and good



- tasting food, for three weeks?
5. Name some of the things we can fast in today's world when we get under a real burden for the cause of God, or for someone in great need.
  6. Why does it sometimes take a while for the Lord to work on the other end of certain needs before results become evident?
  7. How important was it for Daniel to bear the burden that he did, when he did?
  8. How can it be important for us today to be faithful in praying about a burden when the Lord puts it on our heart?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God loves to drop a little thought in our mind, from time to time, to pray for someone or for some special need. Often, we never know how the Lord uses that prayer, but rest assured, He counts on you and me to be faithful to the burden He shares with us.

Daniel was aware of the prophecy that after 70 years, the Lord's people would return to Jerusalem. There were probably many roadblocks to seeing this promise fulfilled, however. Daniel was grieved and burdened because of his understanding of these difficulties.

A problem that could have been of great concern to Daniel was King Cyrus' possible deliberations about allowing the Jew's to return to Jerusalem. It could be that God simply spoke to Cyrus in a dream, or dropped a thought in his mind, and the thing was immediately settled. It's just as likely, though, that the LORD had to keep bringing it up to Cyrus before he yielded. After all, wasn't he the ruler over a vast empire and used to having his way in everything?

God has His way among the kings of the earth, however. Daniel was keenly aware of this and kept praying. So must you and I keep faithful when God's will seems pitted against the stubborn will of humanity or faced with intense opposition from the devil.

*"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your supreme power! Thank you for sharing with us, your people, your desires and plans from time to time. Help us to be faithful to these revelations. Lord, help us to agree with your will, so you don't have to war against us, as you did the prince of Persia! Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

God gave Daniel a burden, and as a result Daniel fasted and prayed that the Lord's will be done. Fasting is and should be a regular part of our Christian experience. Jesus refers to both "when ye pray" (Matthew 6:7) and "when ye fast" (Matthew 6:17) indicating that both should be done as a matter of course.

As Christians, we must remember that we are in a spiritual warfare and that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (II Corinthians 10:4). Fasting helps provide additional power against the enemy as we enter the battle and is especially needed when dealing with strongholds of the enemy. When the disciples couldn't cast out a demon, they took the situation to Jesus who said, "This kind cometh forth not but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

At the end of Daniel's fast, the angel revealed some of the nature of spiritual warfare with the Prince of Persia. There was a spiritual stronghold that needed to be overcome. Although Daniel's prayer had been heard from the first day he uttered it, spiritual forces were attacking and hindering the answer to prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Be encouraged that although you may not see the effects in the natural realm, prayer and fasting work powerfully in the spiritual realm.

—Sis Serena Johnson

**MAY 14, 2023**

### PRAYER OF JABEZ

**1Chronicles 2:55** And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, *and* Suchathites. These *are* the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

**1Chronicles 4:9** And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.

10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine

hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep *me* from evil,

that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

**MEMORY VERSE:** LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear. —Psalm 10:17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jabez, who came into this world through sorrow, prayed that the God of Israel would bless him abundantly. He could have lived under the shadow of his name, Jabez, but prayed that the LORD would give him a much better outcome. God honored his desire and answered his prayer.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

1Chronicles 2:55 **“Dwelt at Jabez”**: A place of learning, most likely founded by Jabez. (*Adam Clarke*)

1Chronicles 4:9 **“Jabez”**: to grieve; sorrowful (*Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*) Adam Clarke also states that the Chaldee version of this verse reads, in part, “And Jabets also, he is Othniel.” Othniel was the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. Othniel was the first judge of Israel and served in that capacity for forty years (Judges 3:7-11). It is not an absolute certainty that Jabez and Othniel, the first judge of Israel, were one and the same, but Jewish tradition leans in that direction.

1 Chronicles 4:10 **“Bless me indeed”**: bless abundantly, or greatly. (*Strong’s*)

1 Chronicles 4:10 **“Enlarge my coast”**: increase or multiply my borders or space. (*Strong’s*)

1 Chronicles 4:10 **“Thine hand”**: literally translates as “the open one,” indicating power, means, and direction. (*Strong’s*)

1 Chronicles 4:10 **“Keep”**: appoint, bestow, bring forth. (*Strong’s*)

1 Chronicles 4:10 **“Grieve”**: to fabricate or fashion, in a bad sense, worry, pain, anger, or hurt. (*Strong’s*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jabez's mother named her son "sorrowful" as a reminder of the extraordinary sorrow accompanying his birth. It is unclear what specific sorrow she referred to, but Jabez, when he grew old enough to be concerned about it, prayed for God to remove the stigma of his name.

### DISCUSSION:

1. When difficulties come, how "permanent" can the pain seem to us at the time?
2. How often and why does one generation pass their own pain to their children and grandchildren?
3. The scripture refers to Jabez as "more honourable than his brethren." How can this fact be related to his prayer for God to bless him?
4. If the birth of Jabez's brothers wasn't as traumatic as his, why didn't his brothers pray in the same manner as Jabez?
5. How can "ease" versus "difficulty" sometimes be a disadvantage spiritually?
6. "God granted Jabez that which he requested." Why?
7. What can you and I do to gain the same benefits as Jabez?
8. How, most likely, were others blessed by what God granted Jabez? How will others be blessed when we pray in the same manner as Jabez?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Not much is recorded in the Bible about Jabez. But he is in good company with Enoch and a host of other faithful saints referred to in the last part of Hebrews chapter 11. Scripture does not elaborate on their lives with a great quantity of words, but God took notice of them and recorded them in His book.

If the Jewish tradition and the Chaldee version of verses 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 are accurate in the claim that Jabez is the same person as Othniel, the first judge of Israel, we can readily see how God honored his prayer and how much of a blessing he was to God's people. Having Othniel as their first judge was certainly a blessing to

Israel; one they didn't enjoy until they cried out to the LORD. The first part of Judges 3 tells how Israel forsook the LORD and how He gave them over to the enemy to be tormented.

In the absence of the idea that Jabez and Othniel are the same person, there is yet another tradition stating that Jabez founded a school for scholars studying the scriptures. The place of study was most likely named Jabez in honor of its benefactor.

Even if Jabez was not the same person as Othniel, the first judge of Israel, and if Jabez we read about did not start a school for the study of the scriptures, he was a blessed man. "God granted him that which he requested." (I Chronicles 4:10b)

What greater blessing can we have from the Lord than for Him to bless us indeed (bless us abundantly) and enlarge our coast (increase or multiply our borders or space)? How can we quantify the value of having God's open hand of power, means, and direction to keep (appoint, bestow, or bring forth) our way and path? If all of this wasn't enough, God delights in deflecting the grief that sin brings – worry, pain, anger, and hurt.

The world is on an endless and hopeless quest for happiness. Tragically, the world looks in all the wrong places and tries all the wrong things! If only every sad and hurting soul would adopt the attitude Jabez took and ask for God to bless them as he did Jabez.

*"Dear Lord, please bless me as you did Jabez! I'm so thankful that you honored his prayer, even though his name meant "sorrowful." Help me, as you did Jabez, by blessing me greatly, granting me larger spiritual borders, and keeping me from all evil that I would not have the pain that sin brings. I know you want these great blessings for me – and I accept them with a grateful heart! Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

In around the year 2000 a book was written about the prayer of Jabez that became a best seller. The book encouraged readers to invoke the prayer daily for 30 days, often seemingly indicating that it could bring prosperity and blessings. Many began reciting this prayer almost as if it was a magical incantation.

We have no record that Jabez prayed this prayer more than once. What we do have is an account of a man, who through

unspecified circumstances and events, was named for sorrow that attended his birth. Jabez may have been born with health issues, or maybe the birth left his mother handicapped. Regardless of the cause of sorrow, the man Jabez was acutely aware of his name's meaning. It would ring in his mind every time he introduced himself to someone or was called by name to stand up before men. A constant reminder that sorrow was tied to him.

So, Jabez petitioned the Lord with a simple request. To paraphrase: "Lord, grant that the sorrow and grief, the hardships and pain, that are indicated by my name may not come upon me, would not bring any more grief. Help me to live right before you." And God granted his request. May we all be so focused on living a life that is not grievous to those around us, to not bring sorrow and pain onto those we love, but to seek God to help us to live a life of kindness and caring, to be a blessing to those around us.

—Bro Eric Doolittle

**MAY 21, 2023**

### **PRAYER OF HANNAH / PRAYER OF ZECHARIAH**

**1Samuel 1:1** Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there.

4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not

eat.

8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? *am* not I better to thee than ten sons?

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

10 And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more *sad*.

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

**Luke 1:5** There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife

was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. —Psalm 69:33

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Hannah suffered a great deal because of her childlessness, but it certainly didn't help matters to be tormented by her adversary, the other wife! God heard her heart cry even though she was completely misunderstood by Eli, the high priest, as she prayed.

Zechariah and his wife were also childless. The angel told him



that his prayer was heard. It mattered not that he may have prayed for a son for forty or more years – God heard in the fullness of time.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

1Samuel 1:6 “**Her adversary**”: tightness, or trouble. A female rival. (*Strong’s*) The other wife (*Adam Clarke*)

Luke 1:7 “**Well stricken in years**”: Elizabeth was 88 years old when John was born, according to the Mandaeen Gospel of John the Baptizer. If Muslim legend is accurate, Zechariah was 92 when he was told his prayer was heard and he would have a son.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It’s possible that Peninnah had ten sons before Hannah had any children, based on Elkanah’s efforts to comfort Hannah. “Am not I better to thee than ten sons?” Tradition also states that Peninnah had two daughters.

The Aggadah gives more detail in the ways Peninnah tormented Hannah. Peninnah would ask Hannah every morning if she had washed the faces of her sons. Then, in the afternoon, she would ask Hannah when she expected them home from school.

According to the Aggadah, two of Peninnah’s children died when Samuel was born. As Hannah had each of her next five children, two more of Peninnah’s children would die. If it hadn’t been for Hannah’s intercessory prayers for Peninnah, when Peninnah finally begged Hannah for forgiveness, would it have been possible that Peninnah would have lost her last two children as well?

Regarding the birth of John the Baptist, it’s interesting that the Lord chose an older, childless couple who had not had children to be his parents. Their situation closely resembles Abraham and Sarah’s lot in life. Zechariah prayed, despite the seeming hopelessness of their situation, and God heard his prayer!

## DISCUSSION:

1. In what ways was Hannah’s pain in being childless compounded?
2. Hannah replied to Eli’s accusation of being drunk in an

appropriate manner, thus helping him understand the true nature of her situation. What might have been the outcome if, instead, she had simply walked out after his rebuff?

3. When no one understands the depths of our hurting heart, who understands completely, and has the power to do something about it?
4. What could have inspired Zechariah to keep on praying, year after year, for a son?
5. How must it have felt when Zechariah was told by the angel that “thy prayer is heard”?
6. The verses following immediately after our reading, tell of Zechariah finding it hard to believe the angel. Why is it in human nature to believe something that seems “too good to be true”?
7. What could have been the result if Zechariah had not been consistent in his prayer for a son?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Hannah had no children. She was tormented by her adversary, most likely daily. This went on for years. Hannah’s husband, seeing the wife he loved most, refusing food and crying bitterly, thought he could cheer her up by suggesting he should mean more to her than ten sons. Mentioning his ten sons by his other wife only put salt in Hannah’s wounded heart. “Ten sons! Why couldn’t she have just one son? But how could her husband understand? After all, he wasn’t childless.”

It is almost impossible for anyone else to understand our pain unless they have gone through something very similar. Suggested diversions or antidotes for our pain can deepen the wound. Elkanah could have handled the situation differently, but he probably meant well. We need not be surprised when those closest to us try to console us but fall short on occasion. God reserves the right to be the one that provides our chief comfort! Thank the Lord that He can.

Eli, being the high priest, should have understood that Hannah was in deep grief, rather than accusing her of being drunk. But, in his defense, it is so easy to misjudge circumstances, even if the difficulty is a great one. Those given great responsibilities are still capable of making a mistake. The important thing is how the mistake is

responded to. Hannah handled this additional difficulty in a way that caused Eli to pronounce a blessing on her. She was to have a son!

A certain young couple were in the first minutes of their wedding ceremony many years ago. The wedding, as was the custom in those days, took place after the church service that Sunday morning. At the last moment, the bride-to-be announced that she could not go through with her vows. The groom turned to the crowd and said, "Well folks, you heard what she said. Is there anyone here who will take her place?" A young lady stood up in the crowd and said, "I will!"

The bride who actually got married that day had known the young man most of her life and had loved him for a long time. For some reason, her new husband had just asked the wrong one to marry him. Fortunately, for everyone involved it all worked out in the end.

What would have happened if the young lady that ended up being the bride that day had stayed home because of her broken heart? Would she have ended up a happy bride? Didn't she have the right to stay away from the wedding? After all, it probably hurt a great deal to see the other young lady standing up there by the man she wished could have been her husband! Fortunately, she had allowed the Lord to help her. My personal belief is that she kept praying!

*"Heavenly Father, help me to keep praying for that which seems to be hopeless. It matters not that others don't always understand what I'm feeling. Help me to pray on, even as Hannah and Zechariah did. Amen!"*

## REFLECTIONS

Have you ever desired something with every fiber of your being until the longing seemed to crush the very essence of joy from your life? Have you ever experienced the realization of the utter impossibility within yourself of possessing that for which your heart cries?

It is likely that at one time or another we have all experienced places of desperate yearning. We long for relief from relentless mental or spiritual battles, oppressions on the job or in the home, deliverance from never-ending physical or emotional pain, or for the realization of the innermost desires of our heart.

The prayers of Hannah and Zechariah were ones of deepest yearning that they too were powerless to do anything about. As the years passed their longings and desperation increased. Hannah was dealing with torment both internally and externally. Zechariah still importuned long after Elizabeth was past childbearing years. These two examples offer hope when seeking God for things that are closest to our heart.

Child of God, hold on. Our Heavenly Father still hears and answers prayer. It may be that the answer for which we so earnestly pray is nearby. But even if it's not, we can have the assurance He is using this to create the unmatched beauty of a completely consecrated life.

Hannah's prayer, when she was granted her heart's desire, is one of joy overflowing. She rejoices in the Lord; she praises Him and acknowledges His power and sovereignty. Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." We are still "eating" of the fruit of Hannah's answered prayers so many years later.

–Sis Diane Doolittle

**MAY 28, 2023**

**HEZEKIAH SPREAD THE LETTER BEFORE THE LORD**

**Isaiah 37:1** And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

2 And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Telassar?

13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

22 This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.

24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, *and* the forest of his Carmel.

28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. —Isaiah 52:10

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** King Hezekiah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, heard the threats of Rabshakeh, the Assyrian general. When a letter from King Sennacherib, filled with similar dire predictions of what Assyria would do, was sent to Hezekiah, he took the letter and spread it before the LORD. Hezekiah's prayer was simple and sincere. He reminded the LORD that He was God and that He already knew all the evidence in the case. It was within His power to countermand all the threatenings of the enemy.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 37:3 **“There is not strength to bring forth”**: This was an allegory likening the dangers of childbirth to Judah's exhausted strength at a most critical time. They desperately needed the LORD's help, or all hope was lost. (*Condensed from Albert Barnes*)

Is 37:38 **“Nisroch his god”**: Sennacherib's favorite idol god, an eagle. This idol was introduced from Persia, and was a god of war. (*Albert Barnes*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had taken all the other major cities of Judah. He now sent Rabshakeh, his general, to besiege Jerusalem. Rabshakeh proclaimed in the Hebrew language, to all the men on the wall, that he was going to take Jerusalem the same way he had taken all the other cities of Judah, and all the other nations before that.

Rabshakeh reminded the people that it was vain to trust in the broken reed of Egypt. This was a true statement, but the reminder was probably meant to discourage them, not correct them. He then tried to convince the people that, because Hezekiah had taken away the high places out of Judah and Jerusalem, it was also vain to trust in the LORD. Finally, Rabshakeh boasted that he had been sent by God to punish Jerusalem.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did Hezekiah liken their troubles to a difficult childbirth?
2. What was the benefit in trusting that the LORD heard the blasphemy against His name, instead of only praying, "LORD, they are threatening us! Please come to our aid!"?
3. Today, what can we "spread before the Lord" for Him to read and consider?
4. When we count our difficulties as an affront to God instead of a personal attack against ourselves, how does this change the dynamics of the battle?
5. How does honesty, humility, and submission to God's will affect our ability to roll our burdens on the Lord and let him do his part?
6. When God defended His people, what did He cause to happen to the Assyrian army and to its king?
7. Besides pray, what did Hezekiah and his army have to do to defeat the Assyrians?
8. There are times when God gives something to do, and other times He tells us to "stand back and watch." What happens if we don't listen to God's direction and get this turned around?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Three words come to mind when considering what transpired between the Assyrians, Judah, and the LORD: bully, bullied, and Father. The bully in this situation was no match for the Father of the bullied. God caused an uprising, and then a separate conflict back home, for the Assyrians, thus dividing and diverting their resources. Then, in response to the letter Hezekiah spread before the LORD, the LORD made it very clear that the "daughter of Zion" would laugh at the Assyrians. Soon after, the angel of the LORD smote 185,000 of the Assyrian troops – all while Jerusalem slept! After the death of a great number of his troops, king Sennacherib went home, worshiped his war idol, and was assassinated by two of his sons. When the Lord steps in, no doubt is left about who is in charge!

Compare the way Hezekiah handled the situation with the Assyrian threat, with the way he dealt with the Babylonian ambassadors sent to congratulate him on his miraculous recovery.



This account can be read in 2Kings 20:12-19. When Hezekiah had been sick unto death during the time of the Assyrian siege, God turned back the sun dial ten degrees and then healed Hezekiah. The Babylonian envoy came to wish him well, and, very likely, tried to find out how the sun dial rolled back. In a fit of pride, Hezekiah showed the wealth of the entire kingdom to these ambassadors. Because of this, God told Hezekiah that all of the wealth he had shown off would be taken by Babylon in the future.

Hezekiah and all of Judah were much better off during the time they were faced with the threat of the Assyrians than they were when flattered with the Babylonian envoy. Our great need, as impossible as it may seem to overcome, is a blessing to us when we take it to God in complete trust and sincerity. On the other hand, our greatest danger comes when all seems to be going so well – especially after a hot battle has been won. Ease, flattery, and pride are not friends of ours!

*“Dear Lord, help me bring everything to you in complete trust and abandonment. I want to let you handle all my battles, not just the ones I feel like are too great for me. After you come to my rescue, help me to not be overcome by the victorious warrior’s greatest enemy – ease and pride. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Prayer is a tool that God has given us to communicate with Him. He is a God who cares for us and answers our prayers. Through it, we can communicate our needs and desires, as well as our praise and adoration. We can express our heart to Him!

In our lesson, we found that Hezekiah was in trouble. He received a letter stating that he and all Jerusalem were going to be destroyed by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, who had successfully destroyed other cities nearby. But when Hezekiah got the letter about the impending destruction, he took it to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. He prayed earnestly to God for help, acknowledging that He was the living God.

Many times, we are faced with dire situations that need God’s intervention. We can use this example to help us during these times. Do we have a letter with disturbing news? Do we have problems that we don’t know how to solve? Do we have loved ones that we are

concerned about? We can make a list of those needs and lay them before God. If we live according to the will of God and come before him with earnest prayer, we can have confidence that he will hear and answer us, just as He did for Hezekiah.

–Sis Doris Clay

**JUNE 4, 2023**

**JACOB'S WRESTLING MATCH**

**Genesis 32:22** And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. —Psalm 34:18

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jacob knew he was facing certain death at the hands of his twin brother. Desperate for God’s help, he somehow found himself in a wrestling match he could not win. Deep within his spirit, Jacob knew he must not give up or he would not get the help he had to have! His life and the life of his entire family depended on him holding on until he received a blessing from God.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 32:24 **“There wrestled a man with him”**: Adam Clarke supposes the man to be Jesus Christ. Other commentators believe the man to be an angel, perhaps even Michael, the arch angel of the LORD. Regardless of who the man really was, Jacob realized that the one he wrestled with had the power and authority to bless him in the ways he so desperately needed.

Genesis 32:25 **“He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint”**: When wrestling, the thigh and hip joint is the center of strength. If one of the hip joints is rendered useless, the combatant is at an extreme disadvantage. (*Condensed from Albert Barnes Commentary*)

Genesis 32:28 **“Jacob”**: heel catcher, or supplanter (*Strong’s*)

Genesis 32:28 **“Israel”**: prince of God (*Albert Barnes*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Jacob had finally come to the realization it was time to return home. He knew he would face his brother and the consequences of his past deeds.

Thinking it wise to be proactive, Jacob sent messengers to his brother to tell him of his return. When word reached Jacob, however, that his brother was coming to meet him with 400 men, he was “greatly afraid and distressed” (Genesis 32:7). The LORD had told Jacob that He would be with him, but the idea of facing his angry brother with 400 men shook him to his core.

Now desperate, Jacob sent a large gift of flocks and herds to Esau.

He divided his wives, children, and servants into two groups, hoping that at least one group would survive.

Jacob did all he could think of to increase his chances of survival and to reduce his losses when he finally met his brother. Yet, somehow, he knew his best efforts were not enough. He had to have something more from God!

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What were the various steps Jacob took to try to work things out himself, regarding the expected confrontation with his brother?
2. When facing our battles today, what kind of results should we expect if we depend on our own cunning and understanding?
3. What position was Jacob in after sending his family and all he had, over the ford Jabbok?
4. What emotions and thoughts might Jacob have experienced when he was finally left alone that night?
5. Jacob refused to let go, even after having his hip put out of joint and after the angel asked him to release him. It was only then that he got his blessing. What does this teach us?
6. What most likely would have happened if Jacob had only relied on his own wisdom and efforts to diffuse his brother's anger?
7. In what ways was Jacob changed, besides his new name?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Jacob was in trouble, and he knew it. This time his trouble was far more than manipulation and trickery could fix. Bribery, with a great number of flocks and herds, wasn't enough. Somehow, Jacob knew that causing the women and children to go ahead of him to greet his brother first would not soften Esau's heart.

Thankfully, Jacob did the right thing, after realizing his own efforts were futile. He turned to God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. When the angelic messenger came to oppose him bodily, Jacob wouldn't give in. He held on with his last ounce of strength and determination. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," was Jacob's only reply when the angel tried to get him to loosen his grip.

It was then that something changed. The circumstance didn't go away, but something deep inside of Jacob was different. He was

given a new name as a reminder of his great transformation. In a moment, Jacob, the supplanter, was now Israel, the prince of God.

When we get to the place that we understand nothing else will help in our distress, we are getting close to our answer. It may not be that our problem will go away, but we will be given a new name, spiritually speaking, but whatever our need is, we can have it met in the fullest way. All that is required of us is a determination to get our blessing from God and a willingness to take on our new name.

*“Dear Lord, help me to abandon my own ideas on how to fix my problem. Help me to fully turn to you, refusing to resort to any other remedy, or easier way out, until you change my spiritual name. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Jesus went out to pray, and after praying all night, He returned and chose His twelve apostles. When He came to the momentous challenge of His life, He too, like Jacob, had to wrestle with God for help. He cried out, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” God sent the angels to minister to Him as He did Jacob.

Daniel sought God for three weeks in earnest prayer, laying aside meats and “pleasant” bread. God sent a heavenly messenger, and Daniel received strength, wisdom, knowledge of the future, and assurance from the Lord for this special time in his life. The messenger informed him that he was a man greatly beloved! Then he told him, your prayer was heard the first day you set your heart to seek the Lord, but it was hindered.

We also have the same opportunity to persevere and “wrestle” with the Lord and receive special strength, help, wisdom, and power when we need it. Keep pressing until the answer comes!

There was a time in my life when I felt very unjustly treated. I needed something special from the Lord. I went home and “wrestled” with the Lord up into the night. The Lord wonderfully visited me and gave me love for the offending brother as if it had never happened. He gave me strength, new direction, and new inspiration. The Lord told me clearly that night to stand like a rock in the billows.

—Bro. Phillip Gellenbeck

**JUNE 11, 2023**

**TOUCHING THE HEM OF JESUS' GARMENT**

**Mark 5:25** And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole. —Mark 6:56

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Some of our problems can be so great that no earthly remedy will help. There can be certain situations that only degrade if any attempt is made toward its betterment. A certain woman had a need like this. Her condition only grew worse with each desperate attempt to get help. Somehow, news reached her of Jesus and His miracles. She knew she must find Him and approach Him unnoticed, for she did not feel like she could ask Him for healing.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Mark 5:25 **“A certain woman”**: We will never know who the woman was, but can be assured that we can put our name in her place, and get the same healing she obtained. God is not a “respector of persons!”

Mark 5:27 **“Came in the press behind”**: Some of our afflictions and needs cannot be, and perhaps should not be, properly explained to anyone else. We may even find it difficult to form audible words to tell Jesus about it, but He still knows. We can come to Jesus, despite everything that presses against our progress, and approach Him “from behind,” if necessary.

Mark 5:27 **“Touched his garment”**: The afflicted woman understood, and rightly so, that all it took was a small connection with the power of Jesus. She also realized that *she* must put forth the effort to make that connection, small as it might be. She *reached* for Jesus, and her touch made contact. It was enough!

Mark 5:31 **“Who touched me?”** Jesus knew perfectly well who touched Him. He asked the question that others might benefit from the faith of the afflicted woman.

Mark 5:34 **“Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole”**: Jesus heals our whole person, not just our body. He wants to make us *whole!*

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The woman in our lesson, afflicted for twelve long years, spent everything she had, in her effort to find relief at the hands of the physicians. Alas, none of them could help her – but they all took her money. To add to her misery, she only grew worse over time.

But then she heard of Jesus! “What do I have left to lose?” she reasoned within herself. “I have nothing I can offer in the way of payment, so I won’t trouble him. I’ll just slip up, unobserved, and touch his clothes!

### DISCUSSION:

1. What made this woman so special that Jesus took notice of her and made it a point to ask who she was?

2. How can you and I obtain the same help she did?
3. What kind of problem can Jesus *not* heal?
4. What significance is there in the woman reaching through the press to touch Jesus?
5. Why did it not take but an instant for the woman to be completely healed of her affliction?
6. As the disciples pointed out, many people touched Jesus that day. Why did Jesus say, "Who touched me?"
7. Describe the touch that Jesus recognized as being special.
8. How can you and I touch Jesus?
9. What could be a hinderance to you and I touching Jesus?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When our faith takes hold of what the Lord wants to do for us, the only thing standing between us, and our healing is our reach toward Jesus. Several instances come to mind where I was in real trouble one way or another. Sometimes, it took a while for me to grasp that the Lord wanted to help me. Other times, it did not take long at all. Each time, though, when I reached out to touch Jesus, the power of healing flowed.

One time I was having great difficulty, hardly able to move. It was difficult to lie in bed, difficult to sit up, and almost impossible to walk. During this time, though, the Lord visited me, and showed me how He wanted me to be hidden completely away in humility. It was a precious revelation of His will, and His love. The next afternoon, while I was lying in bed, a certain brother called asking if I could join in the effort to work on his roof before the upcoming storm moved in. I informed him of my situation and told him I would pray about it. After the phone call I told the Lord about the situation, knowing He already knew. In a moment of time, the Lord responded with these simple words: "You can lay there if you want to." I considered His words, and realized He was willing to heal me! By faith, I swung my legs toward the floor, stood up, and was healed! I was soon on my way to the brother's house and helped work on the roof for several hours. I found that I was able to lift and work like normal.

Another time, during a great trial of affliction, I was praying as I was trying to work outside. The Lord asked me a simple question:



“Have you rebuked the devil?” I thought about it for a moment and realized I had not done so. I then rebuked the devil in Jesus’ name and was touched instantly. I even played horseshoes later that evening and was completely free of pain.

There have been numerous instances of instant touches, for myself, my wife, our children, and many others. Each time, whether the problem was long standing or if the affliction had just come about, when our faith took in the power of Jesus and His willingness to help, all it took was reaching out to Jesus.

Sometimes, our affliction, whether physical, emotional, spiritual, etc., will last for a while – sometimes even years. Is God’s power of none effect in these instances? No, not at all. He is simply waiting for us to get to the place where He can work. I have found, personally, that God is very patient, and in his love will not work ahead of our willingness to get to the place He knows we need to be before He works. When we do become willing, He always works. Thank the Lord! (Isaiah 50:1-2)

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your power and for the power in the name and blood of Jesus. Thank you that you are patient toward all men and are not willing that any should perish and that your desire is to heal all manner of sickness – whether it be spiritual, emotional, or physical. Help us, Heavenly Father, and heal us! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

This woman’s condition made her ceremonially unclean - and left her perpetually that way. Because of the strict codes laid out in Leviticus 15 to deal with types of “uncleanness” such as hers, it made her life very difficult. It directly affected her everyday activities and the lives of those close to her. Anyone who touched her, her clothes, or her bedding also became ceremonially unclean for the rest of the day. This had been the case for twelve long years!

This woman was desperate for true help. For possibly multiple reasons, she didn't or was not able to approach Jesus directly or talk with Him first. The circumstances for her to get help from Jesus were definitely not ideal. She was no doubt in a weakened physical condition because of the continual loss of blood. But, in faith and determination, she pressed forward into the surging crowd anyway. Coming up from behind him, she managed to briefly make contact

with a bit of his clothing. The work was done!

Matthew 9:20 tells us this woman touched the “hem” of his garment. Luke 8:44 says she touched the “border” of his garment. Other translations say the “fringe.” It could also be interpreted as having been the tassels that many Jews wore on the lower corners of their outer garments. Whichever the case, this woman only touched a small portion of His clothing. But her faith combined with action was for complete and instant healing!

We may feel like we are stuck in a very difficult situation. But realize that, like this woman, we don't have to first get everything “perfect” to get our help. Jesus is looking for faith, determination, and an open heart. Can we come to Him with that?

—Bro. Ron Cole

**JUNE 18, 2023**

### **LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY**

**Luke 11:1** And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

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

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

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

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth

what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. —Psalm 69:13

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus' disciples desired to know how to pray effectively. Thankfully, Jesus wanted them to know also. The precepts Jesus taught them are timeless truths for all mankind.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 6:6 "**Enter into thy closet**": Jewish homes had small rooms on the roof top that were often used for prayer. These rooms were often referred to as upper rooms. This is in contrast to the hypocrites standing in the synagogues and street corners to pray. (*Albert Barnes*)

Matthew 6:7 "**Vain repetitions**": to stutter; to prate tediously. (*Strong's*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

John Baptist taught his disciples prayers that were primarily filled with petitions, rather than the usual Jewish prayers that were generally filled with adorations, praises of God, and doxologies. Jesus' disciples knew of John instructing his disciples in prayer and wanted the same benefit of Jesus teaching them as well.

## DISCUSSION:

1. What affect did Jesus' oft' withdrawal for prayer have on them?
2. What reward did Jesus infer people would get if they prayed to be seen of men?
3. While public prayer is proper in its place, what is the necessity, and the benefit, of private prayer?
4. Jesus condemned "vain repetitions." Why?
5. If God already knows what we are in need of, why should we pray to Him about it?
6. Why is it important to begin our prayers with our sincere acknowledgement of who God is and the honor we give to Him?
7. Why is it important to express our desire that God's will be done in us as it is in heaven?
8. Why didn't Jesus instruct us to ask for those things we will need far out into the future?
9. Jesus dwelt on the importance of us forgiving those we feel have wronged us. Why did God choose to tie our willingness to forgive others, to God being willing to forgive us?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It's always good to have an instructor that is an expert in what they are teaching. Often, there are finer points in the instruction that can only be enlarged upon by those who have had years of experience. How would it be if a flight instructor for one of the large passenger jets hardly knew how to fly at all?

Said a different way, an inventor of a particular machine, program, or process knows their subject in a way like no other, as well as having a natural and contagious enthusiasm for their invention.

Jesus fills this criterion perfectly. He was with His Father during creation, and inhabited eternity before that. He intimately knows our Heavenly Father knows us just as well.

A good teacher will impart "high priority points" to their students on any given subject. Jesus did this when He touched on the areas of prayer He knew were of utmost importance: humility, simplicity/sincerity, reverence, trust, and forgiveness. Just as there are certain things that must be within specific parameters for success in the

natural world, the same is true in order to pray effectually.

When my father first instructed me on using a push mower he said “Son, I don’t care how much you use the mower without gas. Just be sure you don’t run it without oil!” He knew that both were important, as well as a sharp blade, all four wheels working well, etc., but he made his point with me.

The same principle applies to prayer. Jesus knows we can’t be successful in prayer if we let down in any of the areas He touched on when instructing His disciples how to pray.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, I realize I may not pray perfectly every time I pray. May this not intimidate me; rather, please help me to live every day in a sincere, thankful, trusting, and forgiving way. Should I ever stumble along the way, help me to reach up to you, trusting that you will give me the forgiveness I need, as well as ever increasing empathy for my brother and sister that have their own struggles. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

James 5:16 **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** Our interest in all learning is to be successful and acquire the intended result of that learning. Good instructors help contribute to that success.

In the book, *I Dared to Call Him Father*, by Bilquis Sheikh, a converted Muslim, she learned much about prayer and how to pray, though she had no teacher. The following relates to one of her experiences.

One night Bilquis was taken (as in a dream) into a sick room where a woman lay very ill; she sensed the woman had cancer. Suddenly, she saw the Lord in the corner of the room. She knelt before Him and asked what she should do. “Pray for her,” he said. So, she went to the woman’s bed and prayed fervently for her healing.

The next morning, Bilquis was awed by what had happened the night before, and questioned, “Why did Jesus ask me to pray for the woman? He was right there. Yet, He asked me to pray for her.”

It was then she had a glimmer of a tremendous revelation! **“Our prayers are vital to our Lord. He works through them. Tremendous power is made available through a good man’s earnest prayer.**

**Thus, our prayer releases this power into the person for whom we plead.”**

Bro. Ostis had a similar conclusion. He spoke in a message in 1982 of Jesus being “moved with compassion and healing their sick.” He believed there was a secret in these words. Someone questioned him, “Why are there more healings in the home and family than in the church at the public altar?” His belief was that the answer was contained in these words. He noted that in our homes and among our loved ones our hearts are touched, and we have a deeper compassion, often producing results. The depth of compassion, the pity we feel, and the tenderness of our spirit have a great deal to do with the results. Thus, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

–Sis Maxine Busbee

**JUNE 25, 2023**

**IF MY PEOPLE, WHICH ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES, AND PRAY**

**2 Chronicles 7:12** And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.

16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man *to be* ruler in Israel.

19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them;

20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a byword among all nations.

21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house?

22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

**MEMORY VERSE:** *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* –Hebrews 10:31

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Lord promised Solomon that he would always be watching, listening, and waiting, for His people to return to Him, should they ever stray. Meanwhile, the land of His people would suffer if they ever did wander. There seems to be ***two stages*** to God’s warning to Solomon: If His people should ever stray, but then repent of their ways after going through difficulty, it would be well with them again. But, if they rebelled at God’s dealings which were designed to help them consider their ways, and if they forsook God altogether in order to serve other gods, He would ***pluck them up by the roots*** and cast them out of His sight. Their memory would then be one of ridicule and astonishment.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

2Chronicles 7:20 “**Pluck them up by the roots**”: this happened to Israel as a nation. All twelve tribes eventually went into captivity, after their continued rebellion against the Lord’s dealings. Most of the tribes eventually lost all of their identity and posterity forever.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Solomon completed the temple and offered the first sacrifices for its dedication. God sent fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering and sacrifices. The glory of the LORD then filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. (2 Ch 7:1-2) After this, Solomon and all the people offered another 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep to the LORD. Solomon and the people feasted for seven days. (2 Ch 7:4-10) After all the people went home rejoicing, the word of the LORD came to Solomon, possibly in a dream. Today, we are discussing what God told Solomon during that revelation.

### DISCUSSION:

1. What was the inferred reason the LORD would send great trouble to Israel, such as drought or pestilence?
2. What were the different steps God expected His people to take, if they ever found themselves under a plague?
3. How could these steps be similar today for anyone in a spiritually compromised state?
4. List the many blessings promised to Solomon and all Israel if they remained faithful to Him.
5. Israel and Judah repeatedly strayed from God. There were times that Judah would return, but finally rejected the LORD one too many times. What happened when the LORD wearied of their repeated backslidings?
6. How does the fate of Israel and Judah, when they were finally plucked up by their roots, give warning to us today?
7. God's warnings included not serving other gods. What are some of the gods the Lord is concerned about today?
8. What is the significance to the phrase, "If my people, which are called by my name"? (2Ch 7:14a)

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In a recent dream, my wife and I were traveling cross country in a train. We deboarded the train, walked up a hill, and stood looking



back down into the valley where the train tracks lay. There was a lot of construction going on near the train tracks. Suddenly someone in our group on the hill called out, "Oh no! The people! They're getting the people!" The understanding somehow came to me that two construction workers had accidentally been hit and several of the heavy equipment operators were now on a rampage. We saw various pieces of heavy equipment moving about at great speed burying innocent people alive in the dirt they were pushing around. Those of us observing the carnage could scarcely believe our eyes.

Other construction workers near us seemed to be in league with the heavy equipment operators. They began to make threatening gestures to our group standing on the hill. We realized we, too, were also in danger, even though we had nothing to do with the accident in the valley that sparked the retaliation we were observing.

After waking with a start and reflecting on the dream, I was reminded that we are living in a time much like the dream illustrated. It doesn't take much to spark an outrage of retaliation. The enemy of our souls seems bent on pitting "group against group" in any manner he can, wherever he can. No one is exempt from danger. There have been numerous periods throughout history that have gone down the same path, but it is no less grievous when it happens today.

Because of the absence of the fear of God, there are various other ways our world is suffering today. The scourge illustrated in my dream is one of the worst the devil has to offer. Mankind often bands together to help one another during a famine, disease epidemic, or natural disaster. When the problem is "man against man," or "group against group," however, the suffering becomes unbearable! May the Lord help us to guard against and resist it!

*"Dear Lord, thank you for your kind mercies to mankind down through the centuries. Please help us, as your people, to humble ourselves in every possible way. Help us to pray and seek your face! May we not try to find our own way out, or join league with anything that your Spirit is warring against. Dear Lord, help us to turn from anything that hinders a closer walk with you. Amen!"*

## REFLECTIONS

The scripture reading today outlined clearly how to obtain favor with God; by humbling ourselves. It also outlined the consequences

of choosing not to humble ourselves. The difficulty is not that we don't understand what The Lord requires, but rather that we, by nature, resist humbling ourselves. Unless we consciously choose to humble ourselves and maintain a determination to seek God, we will be ruled by pride.

We find pride ugly and distasteful when we see it in others and yet we are often blind to the same thing in our own hearts. Pride manifests itself in so many ways that it may be difficult to identify. It can take the form of superiority or inferiority; it can be self-righteous or self-abasing. Pride drives us to care more about our reputation than our character and to look "good" in the eyes of man rather than to be approved before God. Like Adam and Eve, we don't want our sin exposed.

God hates pride whatever the form. There are many examples of how The Lord deals with the proud. Whether with a common man or a ruler, His methods are sometimes extreme. Ultimately, every soul will humble themselves before God. As the scripture says, "Every knee shall bow...and confess to God..." How much better if we CHOOSE humility rather than be brought to our knees? God promises grace to the humble and will help us reject pride. He will beautify us with meekness if we will only heed the instruction and warning!

–Sis Sarah Herron

*Special Note:*

To recycle your Sunday School Quarterlies to be shipped overseas,  
package and mail to:

**Love Packages**  
220 Union Street  
Butler, Illinois 62015



