**There is a Struggle that Comes with Prayer - Part 3**

Mar 9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

Mar 9:15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

Mar 9:16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

Mar 9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

Mar 9:18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

Mar 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, **O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.**

Mar 9:20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

Mar 9:21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

Mar 9:22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

**Mar 9:23****Jesus said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.***

**Mar 9:24****And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.***

***Proper biblical prayer has to be the greatest privilege and blessing for a human being on planet earth.* It is the height of human existence. It is a touch of heaven on earth.** Think about this:*to be able to engage with Almighty God one-on-one, be welcome in His presence, to be His friend, to have His ear and be able to unburden your heart in a welcoming environment has to be the ultimate honor in life.*

***Prayer is the most worthwhile and impactful activity you will engage in, in this life.***

**Prayer should be an incredible experience for you. It is where heaven and earth meet and communicate.** *It is where time and eternity connect.*

Jesus said in Matthew 21:13 **“My house shall be called the house of prayer.”**

Saying all this, ***prayer involves real effort, real disciple, and the implementation of some basic principles, if it is going to be effective.* Ignorance is not helpful when it comes to prayer.**

Please know:

* Prayer matters.
* Prayer makes a difference.
* Prayer allows us (His people) to intimately and supernaturally connect with Him and glean His heart.
* The prayer of faith lets God answer the cry of our heart and perform His will in His time and in His way.

*I hope as we have dug deep and looked at the fundamentals of prayer that it does not sound like prayer is a complicated legalistic A-Z.* ***That is not what it is or should be.***

Saying that, **there are some important elements to prayer that we have highlighted over these past few weeks that should improve our prayer life or remind us of what we already know. If these are applied, you should have a solid foundation to engage with God in a productive way.**

* We established the last time we looked at this subject that we must pray the will of God, which is found in knowing the Word of God and being sensitive to the Spirit of God. We learned, the essence of prayer is not to change God’s will, but to accomplish it.
* We also established that we must know and understand the character and ability of the One we are praying to.  An ignorance of that will totally subjugate your effectiveness.
* We also learned that prayer is not simply a ‘give me’ endeavor, it is primarily thanks, praise and worship. It is from a heart of appreciation that we can effectively bring our petitions to God.

**Be aware that God knows our weaknesses. He knows our shortcomings. *He knows our limitations.*** *He knows our ignorance when it comes to the things of God.* **That is why He has given us help when it comes to prayer and godly living. He has given us His Word for guidelines. *He has given us His Spirit to help us understand and also to empower us.***

*This is especially necessary in prayer as we communicate with our great God.* ***We have learned in previous weeks that we do not even know what to pray.* We therefore need help to know what to say.**

**The more we grow in the Lord the humbler we should get when it comes to spiritual duties. This is never more important than prayer.**

* We should never be presumptuous.
* We should never take anything for granted.
* We should never think we have arrived.

**Knowing man’s frailties allows God to be longsuffering with us. But that is not to say He condones sin. *He deals with it by way of conviction and chastisement.***

It’s OK to come to the Lord like the disciples of old and cry:

**Luke 11:1****“Lord, teach us to pray...”**

It’s OK to pray prayers like this:

*“I am not good enough.”*

*“I cannot.”*

 *“I do not know what to do.”*

*“Unless you show me, I am in ignorance.”*

*“Unless you do it, it is not going to happen.”*

**Psalm 103:14****“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”**

**The default system within us is faulty.** *It is malfunctioning.* Without the Spirit we will go the wrong way every day.

***How foolish it is for us to think we have the ability to please God with our religious efforts or eloquent words.*** **That is an offence to God.** **This is grievous to God.**

*I have learned a long time ago that the low ground is the high ground.*

**You need to know that God wants time with you. You are entitled to come into His presence. *In fact, you are invited into His presence continually to fellowship with Him.***

Hebrews 4:16

**Let us therefore come boldly** (*parrhesia* or with **assurance or confidence**) **unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

This brings me to the pivotal point of this sermon: **as important as it is to have a correct revelation of the character of God, as important as it is to be familiar with God’s promises and to recognize the promptings of His Spirit, as important as it is knowing that prayer is not just asking God for things, and that it involves thanks, praise and worship, if you have all this yet do not exercise faith in your petitions then it renders your prayers impotent. *Your prayers are going nowhere.***

**James 1:6** **let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.**

**James 1:7****For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.**

The definition of doubt is **“to lack confidence, to consider unlikely.”**

**Is this how you approach the Lord? Or are you expectant that He will?**

R. A. Torrey: *“We must pray in faith, that is, we must pray with confident expectation of getting the very thing that we ask… No matter how positive the promises of God may be, we will never receive them in our own experience till we absolutely believe them, and the prayer that gets what it asks is ‘the prayer of faith’, that is, the prayer that has no doubt whatever of getting the very thing that is asked.”*

**What is faith?** **Faith is a response to God. *Faith is believing what God says.*** *Faith is doing what God says****.* Faith is stepping out believing it is a done deal.**

R. C. Sproul makes a very interesting point: *“The issue of faith is not so much whether we believe in God, but whether we believe the God we believe in.”*

I also heard it put like this: *“To have faith does not mean you believe in God, it means you take Him seriously.”*

Basically, *“If God said it I believe it. I will prove my God to be true and faithful.”*

**It is not that you merely want, but you know. *You are steadfast in the knowledge that God is not a man that He can lie.*** *He keeps His Word.*

***God said it, I believe it and that is the end of the story.* It doesn’t matter if everyone around you and everything within and everything around you says no. If God says it then all nature must subject itself to His direction. Isn’t that mighty?**

***We can have confidence in the things we request and cannot see, because God has proven Himself to be faithful, honest, and able.***

This confirms what we were talking about last week:*we can believe His promises because we know who He is.* ***This engenders trust in His character.* It’s all tied together. It is all interrelated.**

* You’re not going to believe what He tells you if you do not trust His character.
* You’re not going to trust His character if you do not believe what He’s telling you.

**So, there must be a trust in who He is, and what He can do. But there must also be a taking a hold of His revealed will “by faith.”**

Jerry Bridges: *“Prayer is the most tangible expression of trust in God.”*

If we could just realize: ***our faith is simply us partnering with God to fulfil His purposes.* When we are in tandem things are good. When not we delay the fulfilment of the promises of God.**

*Faith is not simply believing that God is able, it is believing God will.*

**What about the man with the epileptic son who came to Jesus for help in our main reading?**

**Mar 9:23****Jesus said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.***

**Mar 9:24****And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.***

**This is a powerful petition. It is an honest prayer. *It is a humble cry.*** *It acknowledges that without God we cannot believe as we ought to believe.* ***This is the type of simple prayer God answers.***

R. A. Torrey says confirming what we talked about over this past 2 weeks: *“To pray the prayer of faith we must, first of all, study the Word of God, especially the promises of God, and find out what the will of God is and build our prayers on the written promises of God. Intelligent faith, and that is the only kind of faith that counts with God, must have a warrant. We cannot believe by just trying to make ourselves believe. Such belief as that is not faith but credulity, it is ‘make-believe’.”*

Jesus Matthew 21:22, And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

*Faith is important to God. God responds to our faith.*

**Hudson Taylor**

When Hudson Taylor sailed to China, he heard an urgent knock on his stateroom door. He opened it, and there stood the captain of the ship. “Mr. Taylor,” he said, “we have no wind. We are drifting toward an island where the people are heathen, and I fear they are cannibals.”

“What can I do?” asked Taylor.

“I understand that you believe in God. I want you to pray for wind.”

“All right, Captain, I will, but you must set the sail.”

“Why that’s ridiculous! There’s not even the slightest breeze. Besides, the sailors will think I’m crazy.” But finally, because of Taylor’s insistence, he agreed. Forty-five minutes later he returned and found the missionary still on his knees. “You can stop praying now,” said the captain. “We’ve got more wind than we know what to do with!”

**Dr. Guthrie**

During a time of great drought, the Scottish preacher Dr. Guthrie prayed for rain in the morning service. As he went to church in the afternoon, his daughter, Mary, said, “Here is the umbrella, Papa.”

“What do we need it for,” he asked.

“You prayed for rain this morning, and don’t you expect God will send it?”

They carried the umbrella, and when they came home they were glad to take shelter under it from the drenching storm.

Jesus actually taught in Matthew 21:21–22:

**21.  Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.**

**22.****And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.**

A few chapters before that, Jesus said in Matthew 17:20: **“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”**

Do you have mustard seed faith?

*Well, according to the Word of God, you can move mountains.*

**This faith in God is having faith in something He is going to do. Remember, moving a mountain is something only He can do but is an example of what He can do when we let Him work through us.**

*Prayer is an acknowledgment before God that without Him we can do nothing.*

Please hear me: ***it is not our faith alone that remove mountains, but it is the divine power that is released as we stand upon divine promises by faith that makes the difference.***

Matthew 9:28-29 records: “And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, **Believe ye that I am able to do this?** They said unto him, Yea, Lord. 29 Then touched he their eyes, saying,**According** **to your** **faith be it unto you.**”

Duncan Campbell puts it like this: “desire is one thing, confident anticipation that the desire will be fulfilled is quite another thing … The two go together. This is just another way of saying ‘according to your faith be it onto you’. I’m afraid many of us have our expectations fainter than desire. We pray for strength, we pray for holiness, we pray for revival, and nothing seems to happen. Why? For the simple reason that we do not expect it to happen.”

***As you make a step of faith, God makes the impossible possible.***

**We hear in Scripture about “the prayer of faith.” But faith in what? Faith in His revealed will – whether that is written or prompted by the Spirit of God.**

*The prayer of faith is not you thinking up a good idea and then presenting it before God and then expecting Him to answer it.* ***It is us humbly and sensitively approaching Him in order to ascertain His heart and then praying into that.***

**There are many Christians that literally imagine that they have to think up the petitions they bring to God and then try to convince Him that their plan is a good idea. They then try to manipulate Him with their selfish words. *Others think He is far-off grading their petitions if they come up to standard and whether He will hear them.***

*Bro/Sis, He wants to be active in your prayer life.* **Will you let Him?**

R. A. Torrey: “Here is the point at which many go astray. Here is the point at which I went astray in my early prayer life. Not long after my conversion I got hold of this promise of our Lord Jesus in Mark 11:24, “I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” I said to myself, “All that I need to do if I want anything is to ask God for it and then make myself believe that I am going to get it, and I’ll have it.” So whenever I wanted anything I asked God for it and tried to make myself believe I was going to get it, but I didn’t get it, for it was only “make- believe” and I did not really believe at all. But I later learned that “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ,” and that if I wished to Pray “the prayer of faith” I must have some warrant for my faith, some ground on which to rest my faith, and that the surest of all grounds for faith was the Word of God. So when I desired anything of God I would search the Scriptures to find if there was some promise that covered that case, and then go to God and plead His own promise; and thus resting on that promise I would believe that God had heard, and He had, and I got what I asked.”

***When you pray by faith you should have an unshakeable confidence in the promise God has given you.*** *That is because God keeps His Word.*

I like what it says in Hebrews 10:22: **“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”**

**Heb 10:23****Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)**

**If we have doubt over God’s ability to respond to our requests, why would we even ask Him in the first place?**

R. A. Torrey: “there is a way in which certain people can pray so as not only to get the very thing that they ask, but also to know before they actually get it, that God has heard their prayer and that therefore the thing which they have asked of Him He has granted to them.”

R. A. Torrey: “In order to know that God has heard our prayer and granted us what we asked, we must pray according to His will. When we who believe on the name of the Son of God pray for anything that we know to be according to His will, then we may know, for the all-sufficient reason that God says so in His Word, that God has heard the prayer and granted us what we asked. We may know it, not because we feel it, not because of any inward illumination of the Holy Spirit; we may know it for the very best of all reasons-because God says so in His Word, and “God cannot lie.”

**Heb 10:35****Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.**