

Prayer # 2171

***When Thou didst say, "Seek My face," my heart said to Thee, Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek...Ps. 27:8***

### **Introduction**

The content of this Psalm gives us an opportunity to listen in on one of King David's prayers to God. God is essentially telling David, in the midst of his prayer, to "seek My will and follow My instruction as to how to get yourself out of this mess you're in." For some of us this is a very familiar and common place. To seek God's face is an OT phrase that means to seek His presence for direction and instruction, or, in other words, to seek a morally righteous life. A literal translation of this phrase that God speaks to us means "You should try to obtain a sense of who I am for your direction and purpose." The direction of a person's face was often referred to as the direction he was traveling. God's direction and instruction could be summed up as His will for us. So, as far as this title is concerned in referencing this study, it means that we seek His will in prayer. Although this is not an exclusive way of seeking His will it is an effective way.

Many times when we include ourselves in a study of prayer it can make us conscientious of our prayer that we pray in public, or we can have a tendency to find fault in ours, or others, prayers. That is not the object of this study; I believe that when a person prays God is more concerned about our hearts than He is the words we use.

For the believer there is really nothing new in this study that you will discover, it's all pretty elementary instruction. But even for the most mature of believers we can have a temptation to become complacent in our prayer life and eventually end up in a place that we don't desire to live out our life. When we come to that realization one day we are flabbergasted by our position with the Lord and we can be heard saying, "How do I get this far away from who I desire to be; so far from where God desires me to be?" Our lack of, or complacency in, prayer could be the answer.

The number 2171 is placed after the word "prayer" so that we can know which form of the Greek word for prayer we are studying. Any Greek student could tell you that there are a lot of words in our English language that we have only one word for designating several different forms of the use of the same word. The Greek language uses a different word to designate a type or usage. So this number, that comes from the "Strong's Exhaustive Concordance," is inserted for clarification.

To seek the face of our Lord is to attend His house and ordinances where He grants His presence; and with this a view to enjoy His gracious presence and the light of His countenance. That is, the Lord grants us an audience with Him when we come to Him with a humble, contrite heart and we have a desire to be in His will. There He will greet us with His mercy and grace and He will grant us His favor to live in the affect of His moral attributes, that is, in His holiness, righteousness, benevolence, truth, love, and faithfulness. We should not be content with bare attendance without it; we should not live out our life just to exist, but to know Him and to have a meaning and a purpose for our life. Seeking His face is to seek the Lord Himself, and communion with Him through Christ. The right way to seek Him is in Christ who is the way of access to Him and of acceptance and fellowship with Him. This access to the Father was justified when Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price for our sin so that the Father could declare us righteous and justify our right to His kingdom. We seek Him and acknowledge Him for what He has done and who He is by expressing our gratitude for this through prayer and supplication for His sake and with our whole heart and soul. This is what the Lord calls His people to do, in His Word, and in His benevolent guidance. This is accomplished by the Spirit moving on the hearts of His people and inclining them to say these words, ***“my heart said to Thee, Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek.***

In these words we are telling God that it is His will we are seeking and not our own. It is an encouragement to believers to seek the Lord when He calls them to do it because it is a command with a promise. “Seek and you shall? (Find)”. They shall find Him, see His face, and enjoy His favor. He never tells anybody to “seek My face in vain!” They always find that it is good for them to draw close to Him. Bad results never come about from seeking God’s will for our life. The best way to seek God is to have our hearts engaged in it so that we seek it for what is good. This is the condition of the Psalmist, David, when he prayed this prayer; to hope and believe that the Lord would hear and answer him, having mercy on him; because the Lord asked Him to seek His face and he found his heart ready to do it. What an example for us!

If we were to define prayer we could say that it is: *that activity of believers whereby they communicate with God, worshipping Him, praising Him, thanking Him, confessing to Him, and making requests of Him.* We should take note that all of these activities require a posture of humility. Seeking God with any degree of arrogance will not accomplish our desired end.

Prayer doesn’t have to be a formal written prayer, but all prayer should be spoken from the heart. By the heart is meant our inner affections, passions, impulses, desires and feelings. If we look at this definition for prayer and tear it apart so we can understand it better we will notice, first of all, that our prayer is an activity; we and our prayer must be active, not static, that is, it should be a part of our active life not just set apart for special occasions only. For

example, we should not reserve our prayer for just asking God to bless our food before we eat and then not pray again until the next meal. This probably would come closer to resembling a superstition more than a prayer. People should be able to observe and know what we are doing, if we are praying in public. Not so that we can be applauded by men, but to show others how we glorify Him. We should be in a posture of humility that does not attract attention, but anyone who observes what we are doing would be able to recognize that we are praying. Secondly it is an activity of believers, it is what those who trust in, rely on, and have faith in Jesus Christ participate in, or, in other words, those in truly believe in Him. It's our dialogue with our God. Why do believers do this? It is a means by which they, by their spirit, communicate with God. But, we must remember that communication implies dialogue, it is not a monologue. In other words, it is always appropriate to let God respond to our prayers so that He can give us direction and instruction on how to be in His will. Whenever we pray it is appropriate to wait a few moments in silence so that we can hear what God has to say to us concerning what we just prayed. Our prayers haven't accomplished anything if we don't hear a response from Him, either to give us comfort or to know His will.

What do we talk about? First we worship Him. What is worship? The short definition is an attitude of homage, reverence, and respect. It is a shortened version of the word "worship." He is worthy of our praise, glory, homage, reverence, and respect. Secondly we praise Him as our creator, preserver, governor of all men and things who watches over them with a paternal love and care. In my opinion, the love that you give your child is as close as we can come to experiencing the giving of unconditional love and God loves us much more than the love we have for our own children. We exalt Him especially in song. We raise Him up higher than anything that is worldly; we consider Him the most important thing in our life and He should always hold that position. Thirdly we thank Him; to humbly show ourselves grateful for His redeeming work and all other provision. Fourthly; we confess to Him. A confession is agreeing, or saying the same as He says (especially concerning our sin). We identify with Him as His agent here on earth and we want to be like Him to the fullness of our capacity. And finally we pray to make requests of Him. When we make requests of Him we are humbly admitting our dependence on Him for everything. We agree that He is in control of every situation and circumstance in our life. We should never be concerned about asking our Lord for anything, it delights His ears when He hears that we acknowledge our dependence on Him. All of these items we will deal with in a deeper sense as we go.

Believers pray to God because they know that God is the source of everything that is good, the controller of all events and the possessor of supreme power. We know that anything that is good has its beginning with God and anything that is evil cannot be associated with Him. Sometimes man, in his own ignorance, has tried to associate Him with evil events in the Bible, but the reality is that His righteousness and justice have been unjustly used against Him in

unrighteous accusations. Here are some examples from Scripture that acknowledge the power of God and exalt Him in prayer, ***Neh. 1:4-5; now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and loving-kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments. Neh. 9:6; Thou alone art the Lord, Thou hast made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them, Thou dost give life to all of them and heavenly hosts bows down before Thee. Matt. 6:9; Pray then in this way; Our Father who art in heaven, (or in the heavens), hallowed be Thy name.*** To amplify the point of these verses let's take Matt. 6:9 and draw upon the full context of what the verse is teaching us: *Pray to God to obtain good and avert evil, then, by praying to God in this manner: My Father the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all men and things, Who watches over me with a paternal love and care; Who abides in His heavenly residence, and Who I hold as holy and regard Your name as an expression of Yourself in all of Your being, relationships and attributes.* The first thing that we will notice in His prayer form is that prayer will cause us to obtain what is good from Him and it will help u to avert evil. Secondly Jesus tells us that this is the form of prayer that we should use and not necessarily these words. Thirdly, God is in control of the whole vastness of the universe and so being in control of our circumstances and situations is a relatively minor thing for Him. Fourthly, our prayer should recognize that He is perfectly holy and He resides in a perfectly holy and righteous environment. Fifth, the names that we use for Him is a recognition of His whole holy being, holy majesty and holy attributes. Personally, my favorite name for Him is Jehovah Jireh; God, the Lord will provide.

When we say we pray to God to obtain what is good, the word for “good” should not be interpreted by our definition, but by what it means scripturally: whatever is benevolent, profitable, in the sense of being a good influence on others, and/or useful for the furtherance of Christ's gospel. When we are speaking of a person as being good we are referring to a moral sense of a person of good character, disposition and quality, persons who are upright or virtuous. This refers to someone of good conscience, i.e., conscious of integrity in who they are and what they do. When we pray for this goodness and we are conscious of these qualities in ourselves we will avert evil because none of these qualities are birthed by evil. We give praise to our God and recognize and acknowledge Him for being the Creator of all things seen and unseen, the One who saves us from eternal damnation, and the ruler of this universe. We perceive Him as being a person of unconditional love, with even greater love than a parent has for a child. In my opinion the love that a parent has for a child is probably as close as we can come to unconditional love. He resides in a place of holiness and purity. We respect His name and connect it with this perfection of everything that is righteous and with His incomparable moral attributes that He wants for us and we want to emulate. We should eventually come to a place where we recognize that everything that God is and does is the right and appropriate

thing. He is perfect in every way. When we have a personal relationship with Him we should see Him as a person that we want to emulate.

In verses Matt. 6: 9-13 we have what is generally called "The Lord's Prayer." In using this title, however, we should remember that Jesus never prayed it Himself. Jesus, for example, never had an occasion where he needed to ask for forgiveness. It was given to His disciples as a model after which they could pattern their prayers. It is an illustration of the right manner of prayer that is right in form, content, and spirit. It has all of the five things that that we previously said defined prayer; communication, worship, praise, confession and supplication. The content is appropriate and it requires a humble heart to be effective. It was not given as the exact words they were to use because many words repeated by memory can become empty phrases. Or, repeating what we heard someone else pray because it got a community reaction is not a good prayer. If we repeat our prayers from memory they can be reduced to nothing more than incantations that are nothing less than a magical phrase or formula. **Matt. 6:7; And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.**

"Hallowed be thy name." We should begin our prayers with worship, ascribing praise and honor to Him who is so worthy of it. By praying we acknowledge that we have no power within ourselves to bring about the things we pray for, but God does. If we did have the power we wouldn't need to ask Jesus Christ for that power. However, in that same sense, we do believe that God does have the power to answer prayer and that is why we pray in His name. We as believers are in the position of inferiors praying to a Superior. We will never be equal of superior to God; in fact it was this very sin that caused the fall of the angles and man. We have no right to try to force God to do what we want, but by our prayers we are admitting our own helplessness and our complete dependence on God; this is really brought to light in our prayers of supplication. **Mark 9:17-24; And one of the crowd answered Him, "teacher, I brought You my son, possessed of a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me." And they brought the boy to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "from childhood." "And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If You can? All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief."** We will notice in the last of these verses that when Jesus says "all things are possible to him who believes," He is putting the "ball

back in the father's court by telling him that all things are possible to him who believes, in other words, there is a requirement to answered prayer and that is you must have faith. This verse might be less misunderstood if it read "all things are available to him who believes." In this wording there would be less of a misunderstanding about who has the power to answer prayer. That power is available to us through Christ, but we do not possess it within ourselves. But we must also remember that faith and doubting cannot co-exist; doubting will cancel our prayer request. When the father answers our Lord he says "I do believe, help my unbelief;" these words have caused some consternation among believers in that they seem to contradict each other. However, if we break it down from the Greek interpretation it's not so confusing: *"I have faith, trust, and reliance on You, Lord; assist me in having complete confidence in Your (Christ's), power.*

***Rom. 9:20, On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this", will it? Rom. 11:33, 34, Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?*** Let's look deeper at verse Rom. 9:20; *Therefore I say to you, in the way of reproof and argument against your position, "who do you think you are, that you think you can argue against God? Can a vessel call out to the potter who formed it, saying why have you formed me in this way?"* We, sometimes in our own arrogance want to argue with God about what is good for us, yes, we, whose intelligence was created by God, wants to use that intelligence to argue or question the motives of a holy, righteous, omniscient intelligence, that even at our best is tainted with rebellion to this greater intelligence. To question God's will or judgment is a pure form of arrogance, not to mention a lack of faith. Everything He does is right whether we agree with it or not. When we want to discuss with God what is "good" for us, we need to ask ourselves, "Does this fit the Biblical definition of 'good'?" Referring back to that definition we must remember that what is "good: for us is "whatever is benevolent, or profitable in the sense of being a good influence on others, and/or useful for the furtherance of His gospel."

Paul, in this verse rebukes the grossly lack of respect of the creature who dares to find fault with His Creator. Finite man, who is loaded down by the influence of his flesh and whose thoughts are influenced by sin, ignorance and weakness is in no position to talk back to God or question His wisdom, justice or ways. In this kind of attitude while we are praying we are taking the position of Lord; either trying to be His equal or superior to Him. If this is the case then we must repent of this attitude and confess it as sin. The answer to prayer depends not upon the will-power, zeal, or emotions of the person praying, but upon the wisdom and power of God. God does not look for a reason to put an effort into His feelings, but for a helpless and humble spirit that rests entirely upon Him as being totally helpless and dependent on Him. We should

never be as arrogant as to question God’s motives or methods of answering prayer. ***Ps. 51:17; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Prov. 3:5-6; Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Luke 18:10-14; two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people; swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me, the sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”*** Let’s take a deeper look at Ps. 51:17: *the reasons for the sacrifices of a covenant with God are to bring to birth the breaking of our stubborn pride in us: a bringing to birth, instead, of an inner being that is crushed emotionally and spiritually that is not held in contempt by God.* The things in our life that must be crushed to death are the old attitudes and values that we picked up from this present evil age. These are the things that the “natural” man lusts after in his fleshly appetites. A hart for God will humble himself before God and ask Him to crush this arrogance. The things that God asks us to give up in our life, the majority of the time, are connected with our stubborn pride and lustful appetites. Our lust-filled appetites try to convince us and God that we, for some reason, deserve these things in our life. We can, sometimes unconsciously, attach our identity to things that we would be better without, these “things” eventually become our stumbling blocks to our relationship with the Father. And, when they become a stumbling block to our service to God, are much better discarded by us and sometimes this requires an internal crushing emotionally, but we must realize that as painful as it can be to give up these things, to keep them and to guard them with our life is contemptible to God. We should not want to have any association with the things of this present evil age because these associations are contemptible to God. But God’s motive in this is not to break us emotionally as much as it is to take up residence in our heart.

In this verse 17 the Psalmist is telling God that he is not depending on rituals or ceremonies for forgiveness, because he knows that God is not a ritualist. God’s desire is that we worship Him from the heart and rituals do not have the heart involved, they are just mechanical replays. In this thought we must be careful ourselves that we don’t lower our church services to the level of just being rituals; e.g., our communion service, giving tithes, singing hymns, etc., these can all erode into ritualism. If David thought that God wanted an animal sacrifice he would’ve brought Him one, but it’s not burnt offerings that delights His heart. So he comes with a broken heart, a heart that is broken of pride and arrogance and contemptible appetites—that’s the sacrifice that He delights in. He will not despise a contrite heart that he brings to God. This is a prayer of repentance and a correct approach to God in

prayer. The merit is not in the prayer, but in God who answers the prayer. In the bigger picture it is not the prayer that brings results but the power of God and the faith of the believer in that power. Faith puts the power in motion that causes God's ability to act. Only when believers recognize their helplessness, because if we don't see ourselves as helpless there is nothing God can do for us, can believers really pray in the right spirit; for then they acknowledge that God can do what they cannot, **John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."** I am like the vine that supplies life, you are like the shoots of the vine or the branches that depends on the vine for life; he who remains united with Me, as having one heart, mind, and will, I will remain with him because he is the person that yields much results; because if you exclude Me you can do nothing. Just as a branch on a vine depends on the vine for life; as being the source and provision of nourishment and growth, so too Jesus Christ is the One who gives us a life that is morally acceptable to God. We must remain attached to Him through relationship with Him to secure the only source of what we need to be of service to Him; anyone who thinks that they can be a moral person but detach themselves from Jesus Christ is like the branch that is broken away from the vine. It now has no way of receiving the moral nourishment that is acceptable to Him and thus is of no use to Him and he has condemned himself to spend eternity where all of the other worthless (evil) persons go to spend eternity.

**John 14:7-15; "If you had known Me, you would've known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak of My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** Heb. 1:3-4 tells us that Jesus Christ is the exact representation of the Father's nature, and the radiance of His glory, which reinforces what these verses in John teach us. **Heb. 1:3, 4; who being the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become a much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they.** In this conversation with Philip Jesus also tells us what should be the purpose and motive of our prayer, that is, "that the Father may be glorified." He ends verse 15 by saying in other words "if you are truly My disciple you will do as I do, because that's what disciples do." Jesus makes it very plain to see the dynamics involved in answered prayer



and that if we do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ it will be impossible to have a relationship with the Father. They are of one mind and purpose so you cannot separate them, or the Holy Spirit for that matter. The importance of these verse, I believe, requires that we translate this verse from the Greek to get a good understanding of all that it teaches us, as we read this it would be good to have the mindset that Jesus is talking directly to you: *Consider this Philip, if you would've taken the opportunities to know Me from the beginning, perhaps you would've known My Father also; from this present time henceforth know that you do know Him, and have seen Him, by being acquainted with Me and knowing My character. At that time Philip uttered these words, "Master cause us to see the Father, and that will be sufficient to satisfy us. Jesus said to him, "Have I spent a long time with you in vain?" (Rhetorical question, the answer is NO!), Am I to understand that after having been with you this long amount of time that you still do not yet know My character Philip?" (Philip keeps referring to the Father as He were somehow different, but Jesus keeps bringing him back to Himself trying to get him to see that there is no difference), He who has come to know, to learn and understand Me has learned about and understood the Father; What do you mean then by saying cause us to see the Father?" "Do you not trust in, rely on, and have faith in the veracity of My teaching that I am in union with the Father, and the Father is in union with Me? (Jesus is trying to tell Philip that there is nothing to be gained by seeing the Father because Jesus is an exact representation of the Father and wanting to see Him is just a way of satisfying a fleshly curiosity), The doctrines and promises that I have revealed to you I do not say by way of My own authority, or by obedience only, but in the identity that I have as God, and by the authority of the Father that I stand with Him and remain united with Him, united with Him in My heart, mind, purpose, feeling, and will; My knowledge of Him was not acquired and progressive, but was intuitive and full because I and the Father are One, He is the One that does the miracles and mighty deeds. (Christ was never a "student" of "disciple" of the Father because the Son is equally omniscient with the Father). Have faith in Me that I am united with Him in My heart, mind, purpose, feeling, and will and the Father is united with Me in His heart, mind, purpose, feeling, and will, if you cannot do this then indeed have faith in Me through My good works, words, and resurrection. I say unto you, I who am truth itself, I tell you as a most certain and infallible truth, he who trust in Me as being able and willing to help and answer prayer and the mighty works and miracles that I bring about My agent shall bring about also, (because the relationship that Jesus has with the Father the believer has also); and comparatively greater works than these shall he bring about; because I join Myself with the cause of the Father, (and as disciples of Christ we join ourselves with the Father). Also whatever perhaps you beg from Me in the way of My power, influence, and efficiency and in using My name as being My agent, such will I bring about, so that the Father may be recognized for who and what He is and it can be celebrated with praises, worship, and adoration with the Son, (this should be the motivation and purpose for our prayers). If a condition exists in which your life experience determines that you need to beg for anything from*

*Me as My agent, I will bring it about, (just as Christ does not do His works in His own initiative, we also do not do it of our own initiative). If the condition exists that you delight in Me, you will perform diligently My direction and instructions, (this is a qualifier to be called an “agent of Christ).* In the verses previous to verses 7-15 as Jesus talks about future events He tells His disciples that He provides the one and only way to the Father. In verses 7 and following, He tries to explain that He is the visible manifestations of the Father. His point is that to know Jesus is to know the Father. They should have already known the Father because of their relationship with the Son. As I think about Philip and his conversation that he had with Jesus Christ, may be the same problem that some of us have, that is, we think of Christ as being human putting Him on human level as far as His relationship with the Father. Knowing my son does not mean that you know me, sometimes we can be as far apart on how we see things as the “east is from the west.” He may have *some* of my characteristics, but he is also an individual with characteristics of his own. But we must remember that Jesus had a unique one of a kind relationship with the Father, without all of the trappings of a human relationship.

Jesus then shifts the questioning from the future to the present. Instead of being preoccupied with Jesus’ going away and how they could get to where He is going; they were to realize that Jesus opened the way to the Father right now. The disciples needed to discern the meaning and purpose of Jesus’ time on earth and then respond to Him as their Savior. Jesus holds that way open for us today when He says—“from now on,” from this moment forward we can begin a relationship with the Father by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. The disciples had not yet thoroughly understood this incredible truth, for the death and resurrection of Jesus had not yet occurred (even though Jesus had taught them about these upcoming events), and the Holy Spirit had not yet arrived to help them understand. For “non-believers” access to the Father is a future possibility, for believers it is a current, present position.

Philip was not satisfied—he wanted to see the Father. But Jesus explained that to see Him *is* to see the Father, for Jesus is God in human form. Philip and the disciples, after their years with Jesus, should have come to know and recognize that the One that had been leading and instructing them was God in human, physical form. He is the visible, tangible image of the invisible God. He is the complete revelation of what God is like. Jesus’ answer contains no rebuke even though we are tempted to read it that way; He explained to Philip, who wanted to see the Father, that to know Jesus is to know the Father. The teaching that Jesus was giving to Philip and all believers is far too important to understand to risk having someone close their ears to what He is saying, like we have a tendency to do when someone is rebuking us. Jesus always teaches in a straight to the point, gentle manner; never in a demeaning or condemning approach. The search for God, for truth and reality, ends in Christ.

When Jesus says that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him He is conveying the complete unity between Jesus and the Father. This unity ensures that Jesus truly and completely revealed the Father to us. We know everything that we need to know about the Father. This unity goes far deeper than Jesus being of one mind with the Father—merely reflecting the intentions of the Father. Jesus and the Father are one in essence and purpose. That is why Jesus says that the words that He speaks are not of His own initiative. Then He goes on to say that if this is too much for you to handle right now believe in the works that He has done and continues to do. God’s power was revealed through Jesus’ works. Jesus did many great works and said many great things with the authority of being God.

Then Jesus gives this promise; we will not only do the works that He did, but even greater works. Very likely Jesus gave this promise concerning evangelism, (bearing much fruit). The gospel would be carried out of this region and to all parts of the world and to all peoples.

To pray in Jesus’ name is to pray in union with Jesus’ person and purpose because the “name” of a person symbolizes His essence and destiny, (or end). We have the promise of answered prayer described in these verses if we properly understand the context of Jesus’ last teaching. Jesus promised the disciples that their requests concerning fruit bearing would be answered because it would bring glory to God. Once again, the motive and purpose of our prayer is mentioned. The motive and purpose of our prayers should never be so that we are relieved of our stresses or to have our desires fulfilled. We don’t want to be like the 10 lepers of which only one returned to glorify God after having been healed; ***Luke 17:11-20; And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” And when He saw them, He said to them, “God and show yourselves to the priests.” And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?” Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.”***

The word that is translated as “ask” is derived from the verb that means “to beg.” Asking in this instance and in prayer means coming to the Lord as a beggar does to a generous giver. We cannot, however, demand, but only make our needs known to others and to God, and God will give us according to His discernment of what our real needs are. These verses do not give blanket authorization for the believer to demand anything from God, but only to ask in full dependence upon God’s discernment of particular needs and action according to His

wisdom. To be demanding of anything or anyone is to have an attitude that we are in a higher authority as a master to a slave. We should never be confused over whom the Master is and who is the slave. Many times what we ask for from God is not in His will. He will give us only what is for our eternal good and for the execution of His plan and timetable for the whole world. “Good” for the believer is not what he desires, but what God discerns as the thing which will execute His plan and bring the believer into a closer relationship with Him. Here is another definition of the word “good.”

Jesus sums up what He is telling His disciples by saying that if you truly want to see and know the Father it will be demonstrated and reflected by your moral character and conduct and in your obedience to His teaching and instructions. Asking in Jesus’ name means more than tacking on a required phrase at the end of a hasty and often self-centered prayer. The privilege to approach God “in Jesus name” ought not to be taken lightly. We demonstrate maturity in our faith as we practice the use of Jesus’ name in ways which recognize His enabling power and His unlimited resources.

In the verses of John 15:5 and 14:7-15, Jesus is saying that He Himself is the vine or the sustenance of life and we, as those who trust in, rely on, and have faith in Him are the branches, or the recipient of that life. That is, as the vine that supplies life to the branches, His moral DNA flows through us when we let Jesus Christ flow through us regenerating our hearts, becoming more like Him. Our spiritual DNA gets regenerated to become like His moral image and we are “born again.” It is not a question of the branch living its life for the Vine, but simply letting the life of the Vine flow through the branches. Our Lord needs nothing from us, but we are dependent on Him for “life” as the Bible defines “life.” The life of a vine does not flow from the leaf to the trunk, but visa-versa. The life (eternal existence in the kingdom) of the tree (Christian church) gets its nourishment (the gospel) from the soil, (the Father) to the trunk, (Jesus Christ) flowing to its branches (believers). Sometimes we pray, “Lord, help me live my life for You,” which subtly implies living in our own strength. It might be better to pray, “Lord Jesus, live out Your life through me,” which would imply that He is supplying the strength. Without Christ, we can do nothing. Conversely with Christ we can do all things; ***Phil. 4:13; I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*** A vine branch has one great purpose—to bear fruit. To be a living branch metaphorically means to be of service to God and to know our purpose in life and to have Christ give us a vision for life. Then we must “follow through” with the vision that our Lord has given us. Vine branches are useless for making furniture or for building homes. It does not even make good firewood. But it is good for producing fruit—as long as it abides in the vine. The helplessness of the one praying causes them to trust in God, which means, in other words, that they exercise faith, relying on God for His provision—*this is life.*

Faith therefore is a basic requirement of all true prayer, as we read these verses notice the use of the words like “believe” or “faith” implying reliance and trust; these words are all interchangeable. All or any of these words would be appropriate to use and would lose nothing in the context of the teaching, **Matt. 8:13, And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed that very hour. Mark 9:23, And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.” Mark 11:24, “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted to you.” Heb. 11:6, And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. James 1:6-8, But let him ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man unstable in his ways.** Let’s amplify verse Mark 11:24 to help us get an appropriate understanding of this verse: *So then, I also lay this before you, whenever you pray to God for anything, in whatever it may be, pray with belief, faith and trust that you have obtained them, and if you will pray for the things as our Lord would, (in His name) you will have it in your possession.* Notice that this verse is not in the future tense, as we might assume, but in the present; when you ask in faith, in His name, you have it presently. “Praying” by just repeating words is like hoping that a formula in chemistry or math will give you the answer you desire. God is not interested in a repetition of words as much as a humble heart that recognizes that it is helpless and hopeless without Him. If we pray and then cross our fingers until our prayer is answered, we could be crossing our fingers for a long time. Why? Because this kind of “praying” is like playing the lottery, chances are very slim that you will see the desired results. Jesus Christ wants us to know that we can have assurance that He hears a humble, contrite prayer. A humble and contrite prayer does not have any arrogance, pride, or self-serving notions. Jesus would never pray this way, so we can’t pray it in His name. His motive and purpose of His prayers was that the Father would be glorified and His will would be done.

These verses and especially Mark 11:24 do not give a person authority to pray for miraculous powers or for prideful, self-serving convenience or acclaim; that would be prideful and self-serving. In addition, God never intended that this present evil age would be one of convenience or self-glorification; that is the problem that the Pharisees had. Every act of faith must rest on the promise of God; *pray with belief, faith, and trust that you have obtained them, and if you pray as the Lord would, you will have it in your possession.* If we know that it is God’s will to remove a certain difficulty, (e.g., one that is a stumbling block to preaching the gospel), then we can pray with utter confidence that it will be done. In fact, we can pray with confidence on any subject as long as we are confident it is according to God’s will as revealed to us in the Bible or by the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit. If we want to know for sure that we are praying in God’s will we must do some research, seek out passages that tell us what Jesus

Christ's character would've sought out. When we are really living in touch with the Lord and praying in the Spirit, we can have the assurance of answered prayer before the answer actually comes. **John 16:23, 24; And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.**

When we pray in the present tense we are praying in faith. People do not need large amounts of faith. All they need is enough faith to turn in their helplessness to God, **Matt. 21:21-22, And Jesus answered and said to them. "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall be done."** And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Jesus, noticing their bewilderment at the fig tree that was withering at His command, discretely returned and answered their question of "how did the fig tree wither at once"? And He affirmed this truth to them. "I lay this truth before you, if you have the means to appropriate what God in Christ has for man, that is, faith trust and reliance on who I am, resulting in the transformation of your character and way of life and do not waver, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also even if you say to this mountain, 'Be raised up and thrown away into the sea,' it shall be completed." Also, in doing so, know that everything that you request of God, ask in prayer to Him, having faith, trust and belief, and you shall receive your request." Personally, for me, answered prayer has come in the form of a change in perspective. During the course of my prayer Christ will speak to me and change my thoughts and desires to be more like His. This is much like Paul who, at times, struggled with what he called a thorn in his flesh; **2 Cor. 12:5-10; On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard for my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.** In these verses you can see that the Lord didn't remove the "thorn" but changed Paul's perspective on the "thorn in his flesh," after it was revealed to him that he could draw strength from this "thorn."

In the verses of Matt. 21:21,22; when the disciples expressed amazement at the sudden withering of the tree, the Lord told them that they could do even greater things than this if they had faith. Again, we must realize that these seemingly unqualified promises concerning prayer must be understood in light of all that the Bible teaches on prayer and faith. Verse 22 does not

mean that a Christian can ask for anything he wants and expect to get it. One would doubt the veracity of the title “Christian” as applied to anyone who would ask with selfish motives or with worldly attitudes and values. He must pray in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Bible. Faith has no merit in itself, as if God needs people’s faith to help Him do things. God has complete power in Himself. Faith, trusting in and believing in Him, is simply the means by which believers recognize their dependence on God and come to God to ask Him to exercise that power, **Mark 11:22; And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God.” Acts 3:16; And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. Acts 4:24-31,** (we have a special privilege to listen in on the prayer of the disciples—listen for the worship, communication, confession, gratitude, and supplication in this prayer), **And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say “why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom they did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. And, now Lord, take note of their threats, and grant Thy bondservants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.** Let’s look at Mark 11:22 in an amplified way: *Also Jesus took this occasion to say to His disciples who were listening; “continually have and hold onto your convictions and belief in the truth of God.”* During our times of doubt that God will answer our prayer, we should recall all of the truths about God that we can put our faith and trust in, praying without ceasing; (that is, continually having an attitude of communicating with God), if we do this our faith will not waver.

Sometimes when God answers our prayer in a way that we were not expecting or hoping for, we can allow ourselves to get discouraged, lose faith, and belief, but if we persevere and hold onto our faith with trust and confidence that we worship a righteous God that always does the right thing, we will, when we are standing next to Him in eternity, agree with Him that, yes, He did do the right thing and I agree with what He did. One lesson that we should keep in mind is that when God does not grant our prayer requests as we would desire, it is an act of His grace and mercy that prevents Him from doing so. We should not get mad at God when He doesn’t answer our prayer the way we wanted because we could unknowingly be asking for something that could be ultimately harmful to our well being or the well being of someone

else. Or it could be as simple as He having a better plan; but one thing we can always be sure of—His way is the better way.

Since faith is part of the very nature of prayer, it is impossible for people to use prayer to get their own way because faith tells the Lord to have His own way. Those who try to use prayer in such a way are not really praying at all but have reduced their “prayer” to manipulation. They are arrogantly commanding God instead of humbly depending on Him; They are wanting their will to be done instead of God’s. They are, in essence, challenging God, much like those who tormented Christ as He hung on the cross; ***Matt. 20:20-23; Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one of Your left.” But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “we are able”. He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” James 4:3; You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, (or wickedly), so that you may spend it on, (or in) your pleasures.*** One thing, at least, that should be on our prayer check list, before we pray, is to check our motive for what we are about to pray. Just as it is appropriate to pause after we pray to listen for God’s voice, in my opinion it is just as appropriate to pause before prayer to check ourselves for selfish motives. Will my requests help to promote the gospel or will they feed my flesh. Let’s unpack James 4:3, *You pray to God, acknowledging that He is superior to you requesting your supplications, but you do not recognize the answer to your prayer, that is because you have made a request of God from an improper motive, you made a request of God that would allow you to waste it in your physical pleasures.* It would not be appropriate (nor possible) for God to answer a prayer that would ultimately cause us to sin. God will never answer a prayer the way that we are expecting Him to if it is ultimately not good for us; this would go against His character as an omniscient, benevolent, merciful God. But this does not mean that He did not hear our prayer, He will answer our prayer with the best result of what we asked for, not necessarily what we wanted, but with what is best for us.

This dissertation is about what can happen to relationships when we remove prayer from it. I chose to use a marriage relationship but any relationship applies. The examples that I use can be substituted for whatever fits the present criteria. If we are a “carnal” Christian, (which doesn’t exist because these two words oppose each other), that is a Christian by title only, while associating ourselves with this present evil age, we want to have more things and better things than others. And in the attempt, we find ourselves arguing with and devouring one another (obviously not Christian behavior). In this present evil age it seems more and more, in a marriage that has just taken place that the husband may have a fair job with a



moderate income and at first everything is good. But then the wife wants a nice home, as nice as persons who may have been married for 10 years or more. The husband wants a late model car, like his friends that have upper echelon jobs. The wife then decides that she wants better home furnishings and appliances. As all good hearted Americans do, they are convinced by an experienced salesman that they can afford these items if they purchase these items on the installment plan and if the wife provides supplemental income. The husband's job can barely pay for what they have recently acquired, then, a baby is born into the family. This not only adds to the burden of an ever mounting mountain of bills, it also takes the wife's income out of the equation. As the wife's demands mount, desiring the very best baby pictures, nursery furnishings, name brand baby clothes that will be outgrown before the next pay check, the husband starts to become resentful and irritable. The wife responds with wrongs that were perpetrated by the husband during their courtship years and she becomes competition with Niagara Falls with her tears. Soon the walls of the house are vibrating with crossfire. They are caught up in materialism and it is destroying, their marriage, home, and worst of all their witness, if they really have one, (we should never take a break from being a Christian and should always be willing to set the example for others to follow). Their marriage is like the house that was built without a firm foundation. After the first storm the house starts to shift and defects become apparent. Pretty soon the walls can no longer support the roof and the house begins to fall in on itself. The marriage that in the beginning brought contentment is now reduced to the subject of gossip! Two people who were very content to live together only a few years ago now have become enemies.

It could even be more subtle and seemingly more innocent. It could be that the wife is jealous. She feels that their close friends have a more prominent place in the church that they attend. Soon, the wife, wittingly at first, starts to make comments to the wife of the friends. As the remarks get sharper and sharper in tempo, the two husbands, wanting to defend their wives, get involved. Then other Christians begin to take sides and before you know it the whole "fellowship" is divided—just over one person's desire for prominence in the fellowship.

Here then is the source of the bickering and strife among believers. It comes from the desire for more, and from jealousy of others. "Keeping up with the Jones'" is the polite name for it; more accurately we should call it greed, covetousness, and envy. The desire becomes so strong that people will do almost anything to gratify their lusts. They are slow to learn that true pleasure is not found in this way, but in contentment with what the Lord has provided and who He has given us as a partner in relationship. Prayer, especially praying with the person that we have a relationship with, is like an immunization against infectious materialism. That is because in our appropriate prayer, a prayer with a right motive, we are praying for the other persons needs. These improper motives are what James warned us about in our earlier scripture quote.

Prayer, as a primary source of a solution and not a last resort, is the right approach, to this problem. Praying, especially with the person that we are in a relationship with, is like an immunization against the infection of materialism; because an honest prayer prays for the well-being of the other person and leaves their own self gratification out of it. "Don't argue, don't fight, pray!" James says "you do not have because you do not ask." Instead of taking these things to the Lord in prayer, we try to get what we want by our own efforts. If we want something which we do not have, we should ask God for it. So, if we do ask God and the prayer is unanswered, what then? It simply means that our motives may not have been pure, or that we are asking for something that we unwittingly don't realize might ultimately be harmful to us or to someone else. Or we may not have wanted these requests for the glory of God or for the good of our fellow man.

What a lesson in psychology we have in these verses. If men could be content with what God has given them, what staggering conflict and unrest would be avoided! If we loved our neighbors as ourselves, and were more interested in sharing rather than acquiring, what peace would result! If we would follow our Lord's command to forsake all instead of to accumulate, to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, what contentions would cease! These are all of the things that our Lord taught us in His Sermon on the Mount as He showed us what He desired His disciples to look like.

Long and impressive prayers will not persuade God; neither will an outward show of zeal and earnestness, so we are reminded once again that God is more impressed with the position of our heart rather than the position of our bodies when we pray to Him. Are prayers are not effective by what we say as much as the sincerity of what we say. The words that we use, the length of our prayers and our physical posture play no part in getting God's attention. ***Matt. 6:5-8; And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners; in order to be seen by men, "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." But you when you pray go to your inner room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetitions, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. "Therefore do not be like them; for Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*** Prayers that are prayed to impress men are declared null and void by God because they are prayed to exalt the prayer rather than God. If men are impressed they have received what they have prayed for and they have received their reward (or the answer to their prayer) in full, there is nothing more that God can do with that kind of prayer. ***Mark 12:38-40; And in His teaching He was saying, "Beware of the Scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance sake offer long prayers; these will***

**receive greater condemnation.**” If the Father knows what we need before we ask Him then why is there a need for prayer, why doesn’t He just give it to us? The answer is that praying acknowledges our dependence on Him and sets our hearts in a position of humility, promotes communication with God and gives us an opportunity to confess God and our gratitude to Him for who He is and all that He has done for us; it reminds us that He is the One with the power to initiate grace and mercy. The Pharisees somehow got the idea that social status brings with it a closer relationship with God; probably because they considered their income as a blessing and a favor from God, but in God’s government social status has no value, it does not make us more or less pious. Let’s take a deeper look at Mark 12:38-40 and amplify the words that our Lord taught us: *Also through His acts of tutoring His disciples He was laying this before them: “Take heed of the interpreters of God’s saving purpose, who oppose Jesus’ offer of salvation. The one’s who appear dressed in robes of special authority or sit side by side with those dressed in robes of special authority, who are inclined to walk around in stately robes reaching to their feet or a train sweeping the ground, and desire to be greeted respectfully in the public assemblies, and prestigious seats in the Sabbath’s assemblies, and chief places at banquets, who plunder or take by extortion widows’ houses, and for those who just for appearance sake, try to hide their real intent, offering long words of praying to God; these persons will violently take a comparatively greater sentence of punishment.* This last sentence should not confuse us as far as the form of eternal punishment that awaits non-believers or those that Jesus is referring to in this verse; separation from God, which all of the condemned will endure, is the greatest of possible punishments that anyone could be sentenced to and all of the condemned will be sentenced. The greater condemnation arises out of their attitudes and the response of what non-believers are going to receive while expecting that God count them among the saved. ***Matt. 7:22, 23; Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*** God doesn’t care about our outward appearance, what our social status is, or any other worldly value that teaches a different way to salvation than what Jesus is teaching us and if we hear preaching contrary to His truths we should turn and run as fast as we can in the opposite direction. God is only interested in our internal heart and our desire to have relationship with Him as we express it in our prayers.

The scribes were outwardly religious. They loved to parade in long robes. This distinguished them from the common herd and gave them a sanctimonious appearance. They loved to be greeted with high sounding titles in public places. It did something for their ego. They sought out places of honor in their religious assemblies, as if physical location had something to do with godliness. They not only wanted religious prominence, but social distinction as well. They wanted the best seats in the “restaurants.” But, inwardly they were greedy and insincere. They used the laws to rob widows of their property and livelihood in

order to make financial gain for themselves, pretending that the money was for the Lord's use. Some of the Pharisees and even some people today who refer to themselves as Christian get the wrong notion that just because something has been declared legal by the government that it is no longer immoral to practice what amounts to disobedience to God's law. That somehow man's law supersedes God's law. This is, of course, a ludicrous notion and God will judge the people that make immoral laws that are contrary to His, the people who participate in this "lawlessness," and those who by some mean support these laws unless sometime in their lifetime they repent of what they have done and confess it to our Lord.

The Pharisees recited long prayers—great swelling words of vanity—prayers that were just words alone. If believers expect their prayers to be answered, they must pray in the name of Jesus, not in their own name, selfish and arrogantly. That is, they must pray as if Jesus were praying for what Jesus wants, not what they want. They must desire that certain things will happen for Jesus' sake, not for their own sake. They must desire that glory be brought to God, not to them, and this is understandably hard for us because we all like to get those pats on the back for what we prayed and has come to fruition and has pleased our peers. ***John 14:13; "and whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 16:23-24;"And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."*** To get a fuller understanding of what John has recorded for us in 14:13, let's look deeper into the Greek/English translation which tells us what the motive and purpose of our prayers should be: *Also, what so ever you request from God as you would from the perspective as a more humble inferior person asking of a superior person who has the power and authority to give it, ask it in My name as Your representative before the Father, and I will do what you request as long as your only motive is being in harmony with Mine, so that the Father may be rendered glory in celebration with praises, worship, and adoration and so He will be recognized for who and what He is.* In our prayer we must always remember that God is the superior being, we are the humble inferior. We do not have any rights to be in a position to demand anything from God. But, if we come to the Father, as a representative of Christ and Christ is there with us to give His blessing of what we ask, and our requests cannot be differentiated from a request that Christ would make, we can then be assured that our request will be granted.

What a comfort it must have been to the disciples to know that, even though the Lord was leaving them, they could pray to the Father in His name and receive their requests. This verse does not mean that a believer can get anything he wants from God. The key to understanding His promise in this verse is in the words *in My name—whatever you ask in MY name*. To ask in Jesus' name is not to simply insert His name at the end of the prayer. It is to ask in accordance with His mind and will. It is to ask for those things which will glorify God, bless

mankind, and be for your own spiritual good. In order to ask in Christ's name, we must live in close fellowship with Him. Otherwise we will not know His attitude toward certain situations or circumstances. The closer we are to Him, the more our desires will be the same as His. The Father is glorified in the Son, because the Son only desires those things that are pleasing in God's sight. As prayers of this nature are presented and granted, it causes great glory to be brought to God. God promises to answer the prayers of His people, but only if they offer those prayers out of pure motives, according to His will, and with a genuine desire to glorify God. In these verses in Numbers we have the privilege of listening in on Moses' prayer to the Father; **Num. 14:13-20; But Moses said to the Lord, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Thy strength Thou didst bring up this people from their midst, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of the people, for Thou O Lord, art seen eye to eye, while Thy cloud stands over them; and Thou dost go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if Thou dost slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Thy fame will say, 'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy loving-kindness, just as Thou also hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Matt. 6:10; "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matt. 18:19; "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven." 1 John 5:14-15; And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. Sometimes, as is the case in this verse of 1 John when it says "He hears us," depending on the context of the verse, it can be interpreted as "He agrees with us." Matt. 18:19 is an interesting verse; let's take a closer look at what our Lord is teaching us: *Once more I lay this before you; that if there are two of you that are believers in Me and you both agree together concerning anything here on earth, that they may make requests of God and it shall be completed for them by My Father who dwells in the place where believers are going to receive their inheritance which is incorruptible.* We take notice here that Jesus says "if there are two of you." This does not mean that we cannot make a request of God until we hunt down someone that will agree with us that our prayer is agreeable to God. The reason that He mentions "two" is for the purpose of having a witness that can testify that yes, indeed, this person did pray for this and yes, indeed, his prayer was answered. Two people will add validity to our witness. Now, it is also so that we can check ourselves with another believer to review our requests with them in our desire to have our**

request in alignment with God's will. This other person can also verify our motives and purposes of our prayer.

The question arises, after reading this verse, how large must an assembly be before it can bind and loose? The answer is that two believers may bring such matters to God in prayer with the assurance of being heard. While verse 19 may be used as a general promise of answer to prayer, in the *context* it refers to prayer concerning church discipline. When used in connection with collective prayer in general, it must be taken in light of all other teaching on prayer. For instance our prayers must be:

A. In conformity to the revealed will of God, ***(1 John 5:14-15; And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we asked, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.)***

B. In faith, ***(James 1:6-8; But let him ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways).***

C. In sincerity, ***(Heb. 10:22; let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water).***

Believers should bear in mind that they have no right of their own to come into God's presence with their requests. They come only because Jesus Christ has made entrance into God's presence possible and because God in His grace accepts them. They come before God humbly and reverently, but they also come confidently, ***Heb. 4:14-16; Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*** Since we know that Jesus is with the Father after having endured the same temptations that we have we can have confidence that there is a way that we can be with the Father also. ***Heb. 10:19-22; Since therefore brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*** We can be with the Father because we are positionally in a sinless condition after we repent and confess our sin and receive His forgiveness. Let's take a deeper look at Heb. 4:14-16: *Consequently we*

have for ourselves someone great in power, authority, and dignity, a high priest in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who makes atonement for the sins of men, who has passed through all of the heavens straight to the throne of God, let's become master over our confession of Christ and to Christ. Because we continually have in our possession a person that is in power, authority, dignity, who has compassion with our corruptibility, One who has been solicited to sin in every way as we are, but apart from sin and with the exception of an appeal to a fallen nature which He did not possess. Let's then consequently approach Him with freedom to speak all that we please or think in the midst of others, who take the seat of favor before God, so that we may take on mercy and compassion and may find God's favor to aid us in a time of a need to express mercy to others as He showed mercy to us. We must attain to an attitude of being merciful in our thoughts as well as our actions, because that is the mercy that was shown to us by the person that we are to emulate.

While God's people can pray with assurance, there is no guarantee that God will immediately give us the things that we pray for. In fact, He may not give them at all. The reason for this may be that He has something else in mind that will, in the end, be better for us, better for others and more glorifying to God. If people pray in the right spirit and with the sincere desire that God's will be done, they are assured that God will answer their prayers. In so doing He may give something different from what was requested. He gives people what they would've asked for if they had the full knowledge that He has, **Matt. 7:7-11; Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. For what man is there among you, when his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!** In this next verse we have the privilege of listening in on Jesus' prayer to the Father; **Matt. 26:38-46; Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them and fell on His face and prayed saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And He came to His disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?" "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest" Behold the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners." "Arise, let us be going behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand."** We will notice in this prayer that we just read that when Jesus prays to the Father His only concern was

with the will of the Father and with what would bring glory to Him, our prayers should be so humble. Also as we notice that the disciples slept while Jesus was grieving it shows to us that obviously the disciples were not grieving as Christ was; but before we condemn the disciples we need to look at our own lives. Does our soul grieve over sin, or do we choose to metaphorically sleep?

There's one more thing that I would like to add on as a personal note concerning verse 38; sometimes I can read a verse several times with it having no noticeable effect on me nor do I consider that it has any personal application to me, or so I think! I have read this verse 38 several times and just like a rock that skips across the water I skipped right across these words with it having little or no effect on me, that is, until this week when these words *My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death* seem to have a profound effect on me and I got some slight insight as to what our Lord was telling us and it prompted me to recall an event in my life that gave me some sense of the true depth of His grief that He was enduring while He was in the garden, which also gave to me added meaning to the following verses.

As a foreign war veteran, when my grandfather died the VFW gave him a graveside memorial service. I was positioned along beside side my grandmother in order to give her any physical, emotional, and spiritual support that I could offer, and trying my best to give her a sense of being as one to share her grief with her, somehow believing that shared grief would lessen her burden. My grandfather's death had left my grandmother emotionally, as well as, physically weak, feeling completely drained and empty of her senses, desires, passions, affections, and appetites. Nothing else was as important to her as this current moment in time. When the service had concluded she initially refused to leave, she could not bear the thought of leaving the man that she had loved for so long and so deeply, alone, in that cold, and lonely grave. She had difficulty coming face to face with the reality that she was going to have to live out the rest of her life without him, unable to serve him as she had faithfully done for most of her life. Finally, the time had come, when we had to, against her will, physically, but compassionately, remove her from the cemetery. Because they had been together in fellowship and relationship so long she could not bear the thought of not being able to look upon him anymore—***“she was deeply grieved to the point of death.”***

If we take these words that Jesus spoke and look up the definitions of each word as they translate from the Greek, we see that it could have been written this way; *“My senses, desires, passions, affections, and appetites are surrounded with sorrow and deeply grieve Me unto the point of these feelings experiencing death and I continually tremble in the face of what is to come on Me to the end.”*

So what has Jesus so grieved that he felt the death of His senses, desires, passions, affections, and appetites? Was it the humiliation and insults that He knew He would have to



endure? Was it the unimaginable pain and suffering that He knew was going to be inflicted upon Him? Was He afraid to come face to face with the physical torture and finally death on a cross?

I believe it was none of these separately, yet all of these combined, although He knew that He was going to be subjected to all of these things He only concerned Himself with them because He knew that this meant that the time was drawing near of the necessity of the upcoming separation from the Father, for the first and only time in His existence, that He knew was going to soon come and His having to necessarily endure as the cost for the penalty of our sin—an unimaginable cause for grief to someone who never knew sin and was in a one of a kind, unique, eternal relationship with the Father. This, plus, the sorrows of hell of and death that is a cause for a temporary separation from the Father surrounded Him on every side. At that point in time nothing more could occupy His thoughts or senses. He that knew no sin, when He took upon Himself our sin, knew that the Father could no longer look upon Him as He always had, because the Father's pure and holy eyes cannot look upon sin. This act alone was the epitome of His suffering and death and one that should be recognized by us on our prayers of gratitude. ***2 Cor. 5:21; He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Gal. 5:13; Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."***

Here are more examples of praying in the right spirit and that His will would be done over ours; ***John 11:32, 37, 40-45; Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?" Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe you will see the glory of God?" And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me." "And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou dost hear Me." And when He has said these things He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth." He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, let him go." Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him. 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." Eph. 3:20; Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,***

**according to the power that works within us.** The verse in 2 Cor. 12:8-10 is a very profound verse; let's take a deeper look at it and unpack what Paul is teaching us: *In talking over this matter, about the thorn in my flesh, with the Lord, I beseeched God on three different occasions, that this messenger of Satan might depart from me, and these are the words that He laid before me in His reply. "Now that you are justified freely by My grace, and you have received the forgiveness of your sin and having been reconciled to a holy God who is strong enough and able to assist you in anything of this world or beyond, for when My almighty energy is exercised it has the power to heal and to carry you through any weakness in you that is derived from Adamic sin which should not be overwhelming to you because the power of God is made manifest in your weaknesses." So I, Paul, most gladly would rather exult about in my weaknesses, so that the achieving power of Christ may abide in me and influence my life. So now, I take pleasure with my weaknesses, with mistreatment, with the results of depravity and wickedness in men and from where the inevitability of offenses occur, with hostile prosecution, with great distresses, contingencies, crisis, emergencies, and hardships, for the objective of these is the manifesting of the glory of Christ (the motive and purpose of his exulting); because at the time that I am weak, that is the time I am able to overcome my pressing demands through Him who strengthens me.* All of the words that are underlines are the results of a regenerated heart. Verses like this one are good for us to know because we can have a tendency to deify the disciples of Jesus time, but after reading these things about Paul we realize that Paul was no different than we are. He had weaknesses similar to ours and evidently he has the same temptation that we can have with our pride because he was not granted his prayer request, in the way that he wanted it answered, to have the thorn removed, in order to keep him humble.

In this verse we recognize that Paul had some kind of infirmity that evidently bothered him enough that he asked God to remove it from him. Many theologians think that he was struck with malaria; this can only be based on speculation because Paul doesn't come right out and tell us. It doesn't have to be a physical issue; it could be psychological, spiritual, or emotional. Personally, when I read these verses as if I were saying what Paul says, the thorn would be a person who has conflicting personality with mine. I know that if I were Paul I would struggle to be maintaining the perseverance required to continue in the ministry after all of the persecution that he suffered, mistakenly assuming that these were closed doors. But we must remember that Paul's prayer was answered, but not in the way that he had envisioned. In effect God said to Paul, "I will not remove the thorn, but I will do something better: I will give you grace to bear it. And just remember Paul, that although I have not given you what you asked for, yet I am giving you what you need most deeply. You want My power and strength to accompany your preaching, don't you? Well, the best way to have this happen is for you to be kept in a place of weakness." It is evident by these words that Christ knew that Paul might have had a struggle with pride or some other weakness, if He had not kept him in his weakness. This

was God's repeated answer to Paul's prayer that he requested three times. And it continues to be God's answer to His suffering people throughout the world. Better than the removal of trials and sufferings is the companionship of the Son of God in them, and the assurance of His strength and enabling grace. Notice in these verses that in God's reply to Paul He says; "My grace is sufficient for you, we don't have to ask Him to make His grace sufficient. It already is! Paul, after three times, seems to be completely accepting with the Lord's answer as is indicated in His position that he teaches to his students; "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." After the Lord explained the wisdom of His actions, Paul said in effect that that was the only way he would want it to be. So instead of complaining and grumbling about the thorn, he would rather boast in his infirmities. He would rather get down on his knees and thank the Lord for them. He is gladly willing to endure them if only the power of Christ might rest upon him. The world's philosophy is "what can't be cured must be endured." But Paul radiantly testifies, "what can't be cured can be enjoyed. I enjoy weakness, sufferings, privations, and difficulties." So wonderful did he prove God's grace to be that he even welcomed fresh occasions of drawing upon its fullness. "I gladly glory...I even enjoy—my thorn." (J. Oswald Sanders). Naturally speaking, it is quite impossible for us to take pleasure in the type of experiences listed in these verses. But the key to the understanding of the verse is found in the expression, "for Christ's sake." We should be willing to endure in His cause, and in the furtherance of His gospel, things which we would not commonly endure for ourselves or for the sake of some loved one. It is when we are conscious of our own weakness and nothingness that we most depend on the power of God. And it is when we are thus cast on Him in complete dependence that His power is manifested to us, and we are truly strong by realizing and acknowledging the power that is available to us and we find strength in the things that we accomplish, not in our own power, but His.

If believers live righteous and godly lives, they can have confidence that God hears and answers their prayers. But disobedience, unconfessed sin and an unforgiving spirit are hindrances to prayer because this sort of conduct characterizes someone who does not have a relationship with God and hence cannot be living righteous godly lives. ***Ps. 66:18-19; If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. Isa. 1:15-17; So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes even though you multiply your prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good; Seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Mark 11:25; And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. Heb. 5:7; In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. James 5:16; Therefore confess your sins to one***

***another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 1 Pet. 3:12; For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. 1 John 3:22; And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.*** These verses list what a righteous godly life looks like; we “wash ourselves, make ourselves clean,” (or, repent and confess our sin), remove evil deeds from the sight of God, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow, forgive, practice true piety, keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. In general our life should emulate Jesus Christ’s life. Let’s take a closer look at 1 Pet. 3:12 and amplify the words of this text so that we can better understand Peter’s teaching and get the full implication of what he is saying: *Because the Lord’s affections lay with those who have conditioned their lives by the standard which is not theirs, but God’s, He is present and listens to and understands their supplications: but, He is directed against those who are continually bad in heart, conduct and character and have no desire to repent of their sin.* Obviously someone who is bad in heart, conduct, and character is not a representative of Jesus Christ and we may assume that a person that has this identity would have very selfish, lustful, coveting, prayer requests.

He looks upon those favorably who act righteously as an evidence of the condition of their heart and changed character. So does outward appearance really matter after all? No, but a righteous heart will produce righteous character that will be expressed in righteous conduct. He is attentive to their prayers. Of course, the Lord hears the prayers of all of His people. He has an interest in those who suffer for Christ’s sake without returning evil for evil. When we take advantage of our opportunities for revenge we are not suffering for Christ’s sake. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil. When we talk about the Lord’s face we are usually referring to His divine direction and instruction or in other words, His will. Those who do evil are people who have not taken an interest in having a relationship with Him. So we can see why His face is against them whether they initiate the evil or return evil for evil. Evil is evil, and God opposes it no matter what the circumstances are wherever He finds it. So, we can see why His face is against those who do evil whether it is evil initiated by them or whether it is evil being returned for evil whatever ever the circumstances. In quoting Ps. 34:16, Peter left out the closing words...***“to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth”***, if we translate these words from the Hebrew these last words could read this way, *“to cut out of cut off the name and memory of the wicked dead and wicked nations out of God’s promises.”* This omission was not, in my opinion, an oversight. We are living in the dispensation of the grace of God; it is the acceptable year of the Lord, that is, we accept that the Lord is in charge of our life and the conditions we face and we know that God’s grace is sufficient to see us through any difficulty without our help. The day of vengeance of God has not come yet. When the Lord Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, He will punish evil doers and cut off the remembrance of

them from the earth. He will do away with any evidence that they ever existed. The time for mourning over sin and sinners will have ended; **Rev. 7:16, 17; they (those who wear the white robes) shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. Rev. 21:4; He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.**

Believers are to pray with their mind as well as with their spirit, **1 Cor. 14:9-19; so also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks shall be a barbarian to me. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however in a church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. Rom. 12:2; And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Col. 1:9; For this reason also since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in spiritual wisdom and understanding.** What is praying with the mind and with the spirit all about? We should be striving to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our mind to being in continually thinking of whatever is good, acceptable to God, perfect, being filled with the knowledge of His will in spiritual understanding and wisdom. Let's examine verse 1Cor. 14:15 to see what nuggets we might find: *What is the outcome then of praying in a language other than my own or other than one that I recognize, my spirit prays to God but my mind is unfruitful because when I am praying in the language that I do not understand only my own feelings and emotions find utterance in my prayer to God, but I myself in my mind and heart do not understand what I am praying! I shall pray to God then with the spirit but in a manner that I can understand in my own words also; I shall sing praises and hymns to God with the spirit and with understanding also.* What is the conclusion that Paul comes to, as far as his opinion of praying in the spirit or in tongues? If we pray in the spirit while others are listening, and that sort of praying is in a language that

nobody understands, how can we agree with the prayer? How can we give our “amen” to his prayer? Paul says that he will not only pray with the spirit, but he will also pray in such a manner that his prayers can be understood. This is what he means by “praying with understanding.” It does not mean solely that he will pray with his own understanding, but he will pray so as to help others understand. However, the others may not always know how exactly to express their prayers or what exactly to pray for. In such cases the Holy Spirit, who operates through them in all true prayer, presents the prayers to God on their behalf, **Rom. 8:26-27; And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Rom. 8:34; who is the one who condemns? Jesus Christ is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Eph. 6:18; With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. Heb. 7:25; Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 1 John 2:1; My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Jude 20; But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit.** Just as a side note, in this verse in Jude, when we speak of praying “in” the Holy Spirit it can, at times, be translated as “by means of.” It should also be noted that some Christians, in my opinion, have misinterpreted the word “in” when speaking of “praying in the spirit” thinking that it means that we should all pray in tongues, but in this case, the word for “in” means to *have oneness in heart, mind, and purpose by means of or the intervention of the Holy Spirit.* Romans 8:26-27 has some very interesting things to say to give us some assurance that even though we don’t know the appropriate words to say in our prayer, the Holy Spirit, in a sense, edits our prayers before the Father and gives our prayers appropriateness because He knows our heart and the intent of our prayer, which means He can tell it to the Father appropriately: *In the same manner the Holy Spirit of God, who comes to and acts upon Christians, illuminating and empowering them, remains with them imparting spiritual knowledge, aid, consolation, sanctification, and makes intercession with and for them, also assists us in our general impotence; because we do not understand what to pray to God for as we see a need: however the Holy Spirit of God, Himself, pleads for us on our behalf for our inarticulate prayers in a way that is too holy to be expressed in words. Also He who explores our inner person understands what the tendencies, inclinations, and willingness of our mind is, influences our spirit by His Holy Spirit, because He makes intercession for those who are purified and sanctified by the influences of the Holy Spirit according to the will of God.* This translation of the words spoken in verses 8:26-27 gives us the sense of the power of appropriate prayer. It illumines us to desire to take on the disposition of Jesus Christ and

empowers us to have an effect on those around us by our conduct and example; and this power remains with us in order to give us spiritual knowledge, aid in any aspect that we need it, gives consolation when we seek His wisdom or gives us the appropriate ability to console, sanctifies, makes intercession into their life, assists in our general powerlessness, and discernment. In all of these gifts and accomplishments He does in words that are too holy for our understanding, but are in perfect understanding for God's "ears." As long as we are living in this "tent" made of flesh, everything about us will be tainted with corruption, even our beat intentioned words of prayer, but the Holy Spirit takes out any and all corruption before he offers them to the Father because His eyes are and ears are too pure and holy to be subjected to corruption.

God's Holy Spirit sustains us in our weaknesses. We are often perplexed in our prayer life. We do not know how to pray as we should. We pray selfishly, ignorantly, narrowly. But once again the Spirit comes along side to assist us in our weakness, interceding for us with a communication to God which cannot be translated into words. In this verse it is the Spirit who communicates and not we who communicate, though it does not dismiss our ability to communicate with God. There is a mystery here. We are peering into the unseen, spiritual realm where a great Person and great forces are at work on our behalf. And although we cannot, on this side of heaven, understand it all, we can take infinite encouragement from the fact that a groan may sometimes be the most spiritual prayer. If God searches the hearts of men, and He does, He can also interpret the mind of our spirit, even though that mind finds expressions only in groans, the important thing is that the Holy Spirit's prayers for us are always according to the will of God. And because they are always in accordance with God's will they are always for our good or the good of others.

Prayer is an exercise for Christians collectively as well as individually. It is one of the functions of the church and in particular the leaders of a church, as an example to be followed, ***Matt. 18:19; "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven." Acts 1:14; These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 2:42; And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 6:4; But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Acts 12:12; And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Acts 13:3; then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 20:36; And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.*** Let's unpack verse Acts 20:36: *Also, at the time when he had completed instructing them on helping the poor and the weak, he considered it a proper time to bend his knees to pray to God with all of the*

*them*. At the conclusion of his message to his listeners, Paul knelt on the ground to pray with his elders. For them it was a time of deep sorrow because Paul would probably never see them again as he left to minister to other people and especially other Gentiles. We must remember that in Paul's day they did not have the mode of transportation or communication that we had even 100 years ago, so seeing people in foreign lands was very difficult and time consuming. This is also a common practice among the churches of today, that is, to pray after hearing a message. The one thing that we need to be wary of is that this is not a prayer of thanksgiving that the service is finally over! It should be a prayer of thanksgiving that the Lord sees us as worthy to talk to us through the instructions of His witness and that we can carry this message that we have just heard to others.

The Bible gives us many examples of the matters believers are to pray about.

1. In their concern for the world, they are to pray that the kingly rule of God will have its rightful place in people's lives. ***Matt. 6:10; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*** Let's take a look at this verse from the Greek interpretation: *We pray to Our Father in heaven that His righteousness and peace will be established. Also that His eternal purposes will be fulfilled, on this earth as they are in His dwelling place.* One of the first things that we should take heed of from this verse is that we pray that "God's eternal purposes will be fulfilled;" we are not saying that we somehow have the power to make sure His eternal purposes will be fulfilled but just that we do our part to see to it that His will and purposes will be fulfilled. After worship we should pray for the advancement of God's cause, putting His interests first before our own. Eventually our cause and interests should be the same as His. Specifically we should pray for the day when our Savior God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be the authority in everyone's heart. In this petition we acknowledge that God knows what is best and that we surrender our will to His. It also expresses a longing to see His will acknowledged throughout the world. The worship of God, the sovereign rule of God, and the performance of His will are all a reality in heaven. We acknowledge that this reality is never going to happen in this present evil age, but it should not stop us from praying for it because it can still be a reality in our portion of life or in our sphere of influence. Our prayer is that these conditions might exist here on earth as they do in heaven. ***(see also Rom. 10:1; brethren my heart' desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 1 Tim. 2:1-4; First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings, all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth).*** We do not have the right to



discriminate in our prayers concerning who we desire to attain salvation; neither do we have the knowledge, wisdom, nor understanding to choose who will be condemned.

2. We are to pray that God will send His servants into the world to bring people to know God, **Matt. 9:37-38; Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”** The call for workers of the harvest has not changed since our Lord first made this request. *At that time He laid these words before His disciples; “The converts are ready to be gathered into My kingdom and their numbers are great, however the workers of My cause are small in number, so pray to God who is the Master over this particular need to send out workers to bring in the converts to My kingdom.* As long as we live there will always be somebody that can benefit from hearing from God through us! Evangelists are never unemployed! The point in this witnessing is not for our ego, that is, we do not want to get caught up in a numbers game and thus puff ourselves up with “our accomplishments” as if God is keeping score. But the problem of having enough people to meet the needs of those desiring to hear the gospel has always been a problem since the days of our Lord. It seems that the need has always been greater than the work-force. The Lord Jesus tells us to ask the Lord Father to send out workers. Does this mean that the Father is not aware of the problem of too few for the too many? Not at all. But we do need to remember and be aware of the problem, because while we are here in our comfort zone we can have a tendency to forget that there is still a lot of work to be done in evangelism and if we distinctly hear His voice telling us that this is our ministry, He will provide all that we need to accomplish the task at hand. But, just like any other calling, workers should not go until they are sent. Why? Because someone that is not properly equipped to be a worker may do more damage than good.
3. Pray that God will protect and guide those servants sent to harvest to make their work fruitful. **Eph. 6:19, and pray on my behalf, that utterances may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.** We are always better off if we let the Holy Spirit do the speaking for us and we use His boldness appropriately. Paul offers us an interesting teaching in this verse, let’s define it and amplify the words to get his meaning: *Also pray to God for my sake, that the gift and power of speech may be bestowed upon me in the building up of the confidence of my mouth to allow God to speak through me and I may speak as a teacher with the freedom to speak all that I think or pleases me about the calling of the Gentiles to be fellow heirs and of one body and partakers of Christ by the gospel plan of salvation, its doctrines, declarations, precepts, and promises.* This

prayer of Paul's could be and maybe should be our prayer also. We should always consider it a privilege to bring the gospel message of salvation at every opportunity that we have, regardless of the circumstance or consequences that we may suffer for His cause. Paul was writing this letter from prison. Yet he did not ask for prayer for his early release. Rather he asked for utterance in opening his mouth boldly to declare the mystery of the gospel. That is, declaration by God that had not been revealed to man before this time. He wants to be able to broadcast the gospel filtered through the will of God. He wanted to let the Gentile believers know that they were included in the one body of Christ, and it pleased him to be considered worthy to be the one to do it. We should always consider it a privilege and an honor to be chosen to teach or to be considered worthy of any gift for that matter. The Jews and the Gentiles were no longer considered a separate race in God's eyes. They are embraced by God equally, a person's race or physical composition does not affect the heart of a believer, He loves Jewish and Gentile believers alike. In his circumstance, it did require some boldness, because it was his boldness to preach the gospel that got him into prison, not only by the Romans, but also by the Jews that were in charge of the Synagogues. Although he did not fear being imprisoned, it did hinder his ability to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, which was his bigger concern. ***(see also Acts 12:5; So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. Rom. 15:30, 31; Now I urge you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints. 2 Cor. 1:11; you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many. Phil. 1:19; for I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ).***

4. Concerning the church, Christians should pray that they and their fellow believers might know God and His purposes better, be strengthened by God's power, have unity among the brethren, grow in love, develop wisdom, exercise right judgment, endure hardship with joy, and bring glory to God by lives of fruitfulness and uprightness. We should never be satisfied with the status quo as far as our spiritual development goes. ***John 17:20-23; I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one even as Thou, the Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that***

***Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.*** John 17 gives us a special privilege to listen in on an intimate prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Father. Let's take a deeper look at the intimacy that the Son has with the Father in amplifying His words: *Father, I most tenderly and delicately make this request of You as Your equal, in My prayer, not only on the behalf of the ones that I have sent into the world, that is, the eleven, but also for anyone who has trusted in, relied on, and had faith in Me as the Messiah and as a result of the power of their teaching and the power of their preaching of doctrines and the gospel message by the eleven. I pray that they will be kept from the evil one as they are sent out into the world; I ask this so that everyone may be joined in unity, like minded and of one spirit, just as I am with You, Father, being in mutual union in person and character, in oneness of mind, heart, and purpose as You are one with Me, so that they may be in unity as We are; so that those who live in the inhabited world, may come to trust in, rely on, and have faith in the truth that You have sent Me into this age in order to serve them, forgive their sin, and bring salvation to all. Additionally, this exalted state of blissful perfection which I possess, I have willingly given to them of My own accord and with good will so that they may be like us in mutual union of person and character, joined in unity with us, being like- mind and of one spirit, heart, and purpose as a reflection of Our unity, oneness of character and person in Me and I in them so that they may be brought to a state of completion and fullness in oneness of mind, spirit and purpose, and also so that this inhabited world, may continually know that You, Father did send Me into the world because I delight in them as accordingly You delight in Me.* Jesus extends His prayer beyond the disciples. He prayed for generations yet unborn. In fact, every believer reading this verse can say, "Jesus prayed for me over 2000 years ago!" His prayer was for unity among believers, but this time it was with the salvation of sinners in view. The unity for which Christ prayed was not a matter of the external church union. Rather it was unity based on common moral likeness. The likeness of mind and heart. He was praying that believers might be one in exhibiting the character of God that was seen in Christ. This is what would cause the world to believe that God had sent Him. This is the unity which makes the world say, "I see the love of Christ in those Christians as the Father was seen in Christ." He also prayed for unity in witnessing and unity in glory. This looks forward to the time when the saints will receive their glorified bodies. The glory which the Father gave to Christ is the glory of His resurrection and ascension which we will share with Him in our resurrection and ascension. We do not have this glory yet. It has been given to us as far as the purposes of God are concerned, but we will not receive it until the Savior returns to take us with Him. It will be manifested to the world when Christ returns to set up His kingdom here on earth. At

that time, the world will realize the vital unity between the Father and the Son, and the Son and His people, and will believe that Jesus was the sent One from God. The world will not only realize that Jesus was God the Son, but it will also know that believers were loved by God just as Christ was loved by God, and they also shared in this love. That we should be so loved seems almost incredible, but it is the credible, believable truth. *(see also, Eph.1:16-23; I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might. Eph. 3:14-19; for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Eph. 6:18; with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. Phil. 1:9-11; And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Col. 1:9-11; For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience joyously. Col. 4:12; Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in the will of God).*

5. The believer should also pray for the physical and psychological well-being of each other, *James 5:16, Therefore; confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can*

**accomplish much.** My experience with prayer has been that the prayer for healing is probably the one most prayed with doubt and without faith. Let's take a deeper look at this verse: *So, fully agree with God concerning your own proneness to sin and admit to each other your moral diseases, and pray to God for each other, so that you may be healed from your moral diseases and saved from the consequences of sin. The operative prayer to God is from a man who has conditioned his life by the standard which is God's, justified by faith and showing his faith by his works for others, this kind of prayer can have great force and value.* Confessing our sins one to another can be very intimidating in the beginning. Because of our pride, (which is a sin that needs to be confessed); we don't want the persons in our fellowship to think badly about us; so we have the tendency to want to keep our sins private. Indeed there is a place for private confession, but the general sins of man are sins that the common man knows he has also committed and can relate to. And this is a big reason for us to confess our sin to one another, so we know that we are not alone in our sin and we can get encouragement from the rest of the fellowship and seek their prayers of intervention. When we find out that we are not alone in our sin it makes it easier for us to "confess our sin one to another," and receive healing.

6. Believers are to pray for those who treat them unkindly, and ask for mercy on those who have sinned and brought disgrace on themselves and God by having a disposition that is identifiable as being unkind. ***Matt. 5:44; "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."*** This command from Jesus Christ is at least one of the hardest commands for a Christian to keep, because of our natural tendency to want to destroy our enemies, in any legally judicious way that we can on the one hand, but at the same time it is one of those things in a believers life that separates us from the natural world because it is not natural to pray blessing on your enemy; so let's unpack this verse so that we can begin to trust in it and believe it by practicing it in our daily living: *Also, I give you this command and I lay this before you as truth; wish well and do good to those you have hated or rejected you as being your enemy, and pray for their welfare as God perceives welfare and for His actions in their lives. Invoke God's blessing upon them that pursue you with repeated acts of enmity towards you by praying that they may be turned from their ways through God's intervention in their lives.* The fact that Jesus gives us this teaching in the form of a command tells us that we don't have any other option but to do as He says. Jesus announces to anyone who is contemplating following Him and all that want to be in His kingdom, that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who are making our life as miserable as they possibly can! There should not be any partiality in our love, because there is no partiality in His love. This cannot be accomplished within the realm of the natural; it takes a

reformed heart to produce this kind of attitude and value of those who persecute us. **Acts 10:34, And opening his mouth Peter said, “I most certainly understand now that God is not One to show partiality.** How we respond to the love of God is of no consequence to Him, He loves us the same whether we respond negatively or positively or even if we do not respond at all! Likewise, at the very least our love for others should not depend on how they treat us or how they respond to our love. No doubt when Jesus taught this message, it singled out at least a few people who were on the fence deciding if they were going to follow Jesus or not. The fact that love is commanded shows that it is a matter of the will and not of the emotions. It is not the same as having a natural affection because it is not natural to love those who hate and want to harm you. It is a supernatural grace and can be manifested only by those who have divine life. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will see that we are called upon to do more and more of the things that are not in our original nature, but we do not have the power nor the desire to do it on our own and it can only be done by a reformed nature, reformed by the Holy Spirit in us. *(see also, Job 42:10; And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased all that Job had two-fold.)*

7. We are to pray for civil rulers, so that God’s will might be done on earth and people might live in peace. The more we disagree with our leadership the more proportionately and ardently we should pray for them; this also is not within our natural disposition and will take a reformed heart to practice, **1 Tim. 2:1-2; First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we might lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.** Whether our political party is in office or not, we still can’t become partial in our love and respect for them as people with redeeming value. *I especially call upon you in your prayers to God that you remember in your intercessory prayers and in expressing your gratitude to God that your prayers will be made for the sake of protection, care, benefit and favor of all men; for rulers, and everyone that is in authority over you so that we may live out a composed and undisturbed life from outside of our community in all devotion to God and perform well all of our duties as a citizen while adhering to the highest principles and ideals of heaven and earth and thus drawing respect and approval from men and from God.* Prayer for all people is both a privilege and an obligation. It is a sheer privilege for us to have an audience with God on our behalf or in behalf of our fellow man. Jesus Christ’s work and sacrifice on the cross afforded that privilege to us. And it’s an obligation too, for we are debtors to all with reference to the good news of salvation. Paul lists 4 aspects of prayer—supplication, reverence, intercession, and giving thanks. There is a common acronym used for these four

aspects that all of our prayer should include; ACTS, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, or sometimes we can use CATS, confession, adoration, thanksgiving and supplication. All of these are essential to a humble prayer. Confession is necessary, in that either of two definitions of confession are applicable, we confess our belief in God and we also want to confess our sin to God, so that we can approach Him with a pure heart and pure intentions; i.e., not making our prayer a selfish prayer. Adoration is how we approach God, recognizing God for who He is and all that He has done. Thanksgiving is having a grateful heart for His mercy and graces that He shows to us continuously. Finally, supplication, we ask for His intervention into someone's life or situation. We might summarize the verse, then, by saying that in praying for all men, we should be humble, worshipful, trustful, and thankful. Special mention is made here of kings and all who are in our authority, no matter which political party is in power. These must occupy a special place in our prayers. Elsewhere, Paul has reminded us that the authorities that exist are ordained of God (**Rom. 13:1, Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.**) And that they are ministers of God to us for good (**Rom. 13:4, for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.**) The NT teaches us that a Christian should be loyal to its government under which he lives, except when that government orders him to disobey God. In such a case his first responsibility is to God. A Christian should not engage in revolution or in violence against the government. He may simply refuse to obey any order that is contrary to the word of God and then quietly and submissively take the punishment. The reason that we should pray for our rulers is that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. It is for our own good that the government should be stable and that the country be preserved from revolution, civil war, turmoil, and anarchy. We have to remember the example that Jesus gave to us, even though Jesus lived in a very politically oppressive time there is never any reference given of Him speaking against the governmental authority. He quietly took His punishment when the civil authority commanded Him to disobey God and we, using Him for our role model, must do the same. (**See also; Matt. 6:10, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**)

8. In relation to themselves, believers should pray in times of temptation and when they have spiritual battles, **Matt.6:13; and do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, amen.** As we take the time to unwrap this verse we very easily recognize these words as

ones that we have repeated several times in our prayer life, maybe not even knowing what the mean; *Also we ask that during the times that we are being tempted by evil that we have the faith and confidence that You will not withdraw Your presence from us, but bring us to us a state of testing and trial in which we confidently rely on Your strength and power to bring us through the adversity and affliction in order to encourage us and prove our faith and confidence in You, but draw us away from our times and places of weakness and the danger of being influenced by the evil one. Because we want to belong in Your dominion, and we get our achieving strength from You, and You are the author all of the glory that is bestowed, throughout all eternity, so be it.* God does allow His people to be tested and tried in order to build our confidence and faith in Him. This petition expresses a healthy distrust of our own ability to resist temptations or to stand up under trial. It acknowledges complete dependence on the Lord for preservation. This prayer can be said of all of us who desperately desire to be kept from sin by the power of God. We have learned and recognized through our own experiences and failures that we cannot resist these temptations in our own strength. It is our heart's cry for daily salvation from the power of sin and Satan in our life. The last sentence of this prayer is lacking in many ancient manuscripts. However, such a doxology is the perfect ending to this prayer and it is in the majority of manuscripts. It should, as John Calvin writes, "not only warm our hearts to press toward the glory of God...but also to tell us that all of our prayers...have no other foundation than God alone. ***(see also Matt. 26:36-46; Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again a second time and prayed saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going, behold the one that betrays Me is at hand!"***)



9. To seek the face (or direction) of the Lord and continually desire to know Him better. **Ps. 27:8; When Thou didst say, "Seek My face," My heart said to Thee, "Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek."** Let's look at the meaning of this verse by translating the literal English words to the deeper meaning from the expanded Hebrew translation: *"Since You, Lord, have permitted us and exhorted us to try to work towards obtaining entrance to Your presence by prayer which will lead to our finding Your purpose and direction in our life", my inner being reflected on Your words as I thought to myself of what to say in response, my mind, will, and emotion, says to You, "Your purpose and direction for me, O Lord, I shall try to obtain."* Usually in Psalms we read of prayers of thanksgiving toward the end of the Psalm, based on the assumption that the request that we are making is already in the stage of being answered; which is a strong indication or evidence of the faith of the prayer. But in this Psalm it is in the beginning of the Psalm. No matter where our faith plays a part in our prayer, a prayer without faith that it will be answered is merely a mechanical prayer; a waste of breath and thought. A meaningful prayer, as in this Psalm, should seek the presence of God. If we truly seek His presence we will know better how to pray, because in response to our faith and requests we will be guided to a purpose and a direction of His will. We must keep in mind that a prayer that seeks His guidance is not your run of the mill prayer filled with Christianese, prayed out of skeptical duty because it might work, meaning that we have the attitude of "what've we got to lose by doing this," or one that sounds good to others if we are praying publically. The first thing most of us have to do, when we pray, is to set aside our own will for the outcome and know that God's will and sovereignty is always perfectly righteous and just. Also we can have faith in Him to produce the proper outcome, even if we don't agree with it. **(see also, Ps. 105:4, Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually. Amos 5:6 Seek the Lord that you may live. Psalm 34:4, I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from my fears; Luke 6:12-13, and it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came He called His disciples to Him, and chose twelve of them who He also named apostles. Acts 1:24-25, And they prayed and said, Thou Lord who knows the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place).** Every time we see Jesus or one of His fervent followers at a point where an important decision needs to be made, what did they do? Pray.
10. To get wisdom, **James 1:5-8; but if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting for one who doubts is like the surf of the sea**

***driven and tossed by the wind, For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*** Let's go back and look at all of the implications of the Greek wording in this verse: *However, if any of you find yourself in the condition of being deficient in deep spiritual knowledge, natural and moral insight, as imparted from God, in learning, science, cultivation of the mind and enlightened understanding in respect to divine things including practical application joined with purity of heart and life, let him seek after it from the person in the highest of authority who is God, because He gives of His own accord and with good will bountifully and without scolding you and this wisdom will be given to him of His own accord and good will. But, I caution you to request wisdom through suitable confidence without any hesitation, because the person who hesitates is comparable to the raging of the sea driven by the wind and agitated by the waves. Consequently that man should not expect to be given anything from the Lord, because he is being comparable to a person filled with doubt, unsettled and unsteady in every aspect of his way of life, conduct and actions, praying without belief or faith that what he is praying for will be accomplished.* We do not have to, and further more should not even try, to face the problems in our life in our own wisdom. If, in a time of trial, we lack spiritual insight, we should go to God and tell Him all about our perplexity and ignorance. All of us who would take this direction, who are seeking God's purpose for the trials, will find it being revealed to him liberally. And we need not worry about God scolding us, or being concerned about how approachable God is; trying to determine what mood He is in before we ask, because He is pleased to see us desiring knowledge about Him and seeking His will, being teachable, and obedient. All of us lack wisdom. The Bible does not give specific answers to innumerable problems that arise in life. It does not solve problems in so many words, but God's word does give us general principles. We must apply these principles to problems as they arise day by day. That is why we need God's wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is the practical application of our Lord's teachings to everyday situations. But, we must approach God in faith without doubting. We must believe that He loves and cares for us, and that nothing is impossible with Him. If we doubt His goodness and His power, we will have no stability in our time trouble. One minute we might be resting quietly on His promises and the next be thinking that God has forgotten to be kind. We will be like the surge of the sea, rising to great heights and then falling back into the valleys—troubled and tossed. We do not honor nor glorify God with this kind of faith or lack of faith. That mind-set that alternates between optimism and pessimism. He does not give divine insight to such vacillating, unstable men. The source of all wisdom is God and we acquire it through fervent faithful prayer. It can be available to anybody and

everybody. It is given without reproach; the crucial condition is that we ask in faith without doubting. Doubting and faith are mutually exclusive; we must choose which foundation we are going to stand on, skepticism or confidence. Are we going to stand on the shifting sand or the solid Rock? (*see also Rev. 3:15-16; I know your deeds; that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.*)

11. To get our eyes off our problems and on to the Lord. ***Psalm 121:1, 2; I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*** The Hebrew translation of these words sounds like this: *I will look toward the lofty and mighty places where God sits enthroned, to be in the presence of His strength, wisdom, and stability that reaches to the remotest ends and corners of His creation; from where shall my aid and assistance be brought to me? My aid and assistance comes from the Lord, who performed the activity of creating the heavens including everything in the universe and the whole earth under God's dominion, with this distinct purpose in mind, to be willing to provide the power to help us.* When we focus on our problems, they seem to somehow magnify themselves to be bigger than they are in reality. If we turn our focus onto God, in prayer and meditation, He will give us insight, a different perspective, and a new attitude toward our problem. We must believe that if our God, who created the earth and universe, hears us when we pray concerning our problem, that this is a relatively small issue for Him compared to what He has already accomplished in this creation. Man is not wise enough, nor strong enough, to create a problem that our God, the God of this universe, cannot solve. We have the greatest resource at our command to get us through any issues, yet we seldom defer to this power and strength, choosing instead to either sit in the sewage of our problems, or convince ourselves that we have the power, within us, to cause a change in our circumstances. We have neither! This type of thinking only makes us bait for Satan and his forces to attack us and manipulate our reasoning into believing that our problems loom larger than life itself. As a believer we should follow the exhortation in **1 Thess. 5:17; "pray without ceasing."** If we do this; praying to God will become the first plan of action instead of our last resort action.
12. We must pray for His protection of us. ***Psalm 57:1-3, Be gracious to me O God, for my soul takes refuge in Thee; and in the shadow of Thy wings I will take refuge, until destruction passes by. I will cry to God most high, to God who accomplishes all things for me. He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me. God will send forth His loving kindness and His truth.*** The only protection that we can confidently count on that will not let us down is the

protection offered by Our Lord. This is who David is crying out to, let's take this verse apart to better understand David's confidence in the same Lord that we put our confidence in: *Be gracious to me in my time of need, O One True God, according to Your loving kindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, and love. According to the abundance of Your compassion, tenderness, and mercy I request that You wipe out all of my rebellion towards You and Your laws in the hope that I will be restored in our relationship and forgiven as I repent. Cleanse my heart greatly from my iniquity, evil, and guilt, Lord and make my heart white as snow. Free me, cleanse me, and purify me from my transgressions. Because I confess my rebellion against You and Your laws, and the illness of my sin is continually over me.* David had just been confronted by Nathan concerning his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. David shows us how to make a good confession to Our Lord from a broken spirit and contrite heart. In his words he says; "Mercy... O God! I ask for Your mercy! I deserve to be punished. But You are a kind God full of loving-kindness and on that basis I ask that You not treat me in the way that I deserve. Your mercies are super-abounding and because of that I dare to ask that You erase my awful violations of Your holy law. Wash me through and through from every instance where I have departed from Your straight line, and cleanse me from the frightful ways in which I have missed the mark. Oh My God, I publically acknowledge that I have broken Your law. My sin is public and my repentance is public too. The guilt of my sin has been haunting me day and night, and I cannot stand it anymore." Sometimes when we try to justify sinful behavior, or we are wrestling with a thought or deed that we are trying to convince ourselves is not sin and does not need to be repented, the conviction of the Holy Spirit on our hearts perseveres until we are willing to agree that it was or is a sin and we don't get any peace until we do repent of it. **(See also, Neh. 4:8-9 and all of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night).**

13. To be provided for with the necessities of life. **Matt. 6:11, Give us this day our daily bread.** This is another phrase that we have repeated over and over during our lifetime but never really considered the implications of the words, so let's unpack these words to get their full meaning: *Father, as the source of all that we receive that is needful to the sustenance of our being, grant us today our daily need for sustenance of our body.* After we put God's will first in our prayer we are permitted to present our own needs. This petition acknowledges our dependence on God for daily food, both spiritual and physical. We deserve nothing from Him, it is all a gift from Him. We ought to be thankful for what we have, without murmuring at His provisions or at what He has given to others, much like the ungrateful child receiving

Christmas gifts with an attitude of greed. (*see also; Deut. 26:15; Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the ground which Thou hast given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Thou did swear to our fathers*).

14. By prayer we can overcome anxiety, *Phil. 4:6; be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known to God*. Anxiety is a natural response to fear of the unknown. But we as Christians do not live in the natural realm and we know and believe that *“His perfect love casts out all fear.”* So let’s take a deeper look at this verse and see what we need to remain calm in any and all situations: *Do not be anxious, troubled, overly caring or waste time on dwelling too long for anything, or take on an attitude of denial of reality, instead use your time wisely by praying to God for all of your needs and make your requests revealed to Him with an attitude of gratefulness*. This verse can seem like a good idea, but for some of us it seems more of an impossible task. Yet we have examples of persons who were in very tight spots in their life but did not allow these situations to cause them to worry. Paul was imprisoned many times not knowing if he would ever be released or take another breath. Jesus answered Martha very appropriately for her time that she lived and ours as well in *Luke 10: 41-42. But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her.”* The word for “anxious” as it is used here in the Greek means “to be of a divided mind.” Whether to seek this way or that way, to use this means or that means. Christians are encouraged to never worry about a single thing. To worry is to show evidence of our lack of faith; lack in believing that Jesus will protect us, provide for us and has our best interest in mind. This is not something that we can control within ourselves; either we have it or we don’t. If we pray first, letting God know our concerns, the need for worry will not find its way to our heart. Paul’s very words contain the assurance that God will attend to all that we ask by either giving this to us or giving us something better, over and above what we ask or think. This, then should be accompanied by our thanksgiving, and this thanksgiving does not need to wait until the thing prayed for is accomplished because that too would a lack of faith, but give thanksgiving right away knowing that He has heard our prayer and will act on it. Only a thankful heart is a joyful heart. The heartthrob of every prayer is thankfulness. (*See also 1 Pet. 5:6-7, Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exult you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him. Because He cares for you*).

15. To speak to God. **1 Pet. 3:12, For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.** Reading this verse as it would be amplified it would read like this: *Because the affections of the Lord are resting upon those that have conditioned their lives by the standard which is not theirs but God's, and He listens to their wants and needs, but the Lord is directed against those who are bad in heart, conduct and character.* In the amplified version of this verse we see the definition of a righteous person. When the Bible says that the Lord's eyes are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, it doesn't mean that the righteous have exclusive rights to His oversight and intimacy. God loves all of His creation; this verse has more of the meaning that the righteous, who are only righteous through Christ's righteousness, are the ones that have a meaningful relationship with Him and thus a better knowledge of His will; which leads to how to pray and for what to pray. The "righteous" will have more of a tendency to pray for and seek after answers that are appropriate for His kingdom and the well-being of His kingdom, which should be unselfish prayers on the part of the believer. And because He loves this righteousness, He is well-pleased with it. He is magnified and made honorable through them; therefore His countenance is filled with pleasure and He delights in those righteous ones who are identified by it. If we are a person who is identified by being one who has conditioned their life by the standard that is God's and not theirs, we are considered righteous. He sees every injury done to them and in His own time and way He will bring them justice. We can trust that God has a perfect way of dealing with people that have not been fair to us. The "unrighteous" of course would not be familiar with the furnishings of His kingdom, nor God's will, and these persons would be prone to pray selfish prayers. Prayers that would promote their own selfish ambitions on a worldly scale. The mission of Christ in His incarnation was to save us from the world with its values and attitudes. God would not agree to answer a prayer that would ultimately be harmful to anyone, whether it is in this present time or in eternity. **Phil. 3:8, I count all things to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** Paul tells us in this verse that there is nothing of value in this world that compares to the value of knowing Christ. So He should never take second place in our life, His presence should always be our first and our highest priority. In our own humanness getting to the point of having an intimate relationship with the Lord is no different than having an intimate relationship another person. We talk to them daily, we tell them about our concerns, desires, and state of affairs. The Lord wants this same conversation and He wants to provide us the counsel that will accomplish what is best for us as well as His kingdom. You could say that He wants to befriend us on His "spiritual face-book."

16. To unburden your heart. **Psalm 142:1-2, I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord; I make supplication with my voice to the Lord, I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him.** In the Psalms David gives us a glimpse of how he prayed and lets us know that he is not a superior person to us in any way, so let's amplify his words to get a better insight into his prayer: *In my time of need I called out to the Lord, in a humble manner, with my audible pleading for His grace and mercy; I ask for Him to be gracious to me as I called out to Him, I poured out my heart and soul to Him as I complained about my sins and in particular my unbelief, to Him, while being in His presence; I made known to Him this time of my discomfort and extreme distress while I was in His presence.* We will notice in the translation part of this verse "I called out to the Lord in a humble manner," we never demand anything from God. In this verse David, who wrote this Psalm, is being chased and sought by Saul, who, most likely will take his life if he is caught. So David is trying to escape the persecution that will come if he is caught. This is distressing to David, not merely because he is trying to escape Saul's persecution, but that it is his own earthly king, whom he owes allegiance (Saul), who is the one hunting him down. Someone that David loves very much and respects, not only as merely his king, but also because of the position that he holds, that of being his *God appointed* king. He feels forsaken by every created being, so He confides in his God. He turns to Him in a pitiful and pleading prayer. Not just a prayer that he prays inwardly, but with an audible voice for it seems that with an audible prayer the mind reacts soothingly, strengtheningly, and sanctifyingly upon the praying one. Faith gives us the confidence to trust and rely on God and this faith comes from David praying aloud, because faith comes by hearing, **Rom. 10:17; so faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** He pours out before Him his troubles to the Lord which, when prayed out loud does not distract his thoughts. He lays open before Him everything that burdens and distresses him. Not as if God didn't already know what was going on in David's life at this time without this prayer; but, on the contrary while his spirit within him is enshrouded and languishes, this fact he knows, that His God has been watching over him all this time, this is his consolation. Faith and confidence are at work in his heart. God is intimately acquainted with what's going on in his life together with the dangers of what will happen if his father catches him, these things have threaten him at every step, yet he is alive and well. So he expresses all of his concerns and complaints about himself, he acknowledges his sin and prays for God's grace and mercy, not because he has done anything to merit this grace and mercy, but he acknowledges that his God is a graceful and merciful God. He lists his complaints in his prayer, not for the position he finds himself in, but for the sinful person that he acknowledges to God that he is; and

because he believes that God has the answer to his questions whose answers have evaded him in his own initiative. David's relationship with God is intimate enough that he knows that his God is familiar with his stresses and complaints intimately and so knows how to address them and give David comfort. David, through faith, has assurance that God has heard his prayer. Sometimes, when we feel like that we are trapped in a time of distress and it seems like there is no escape and we are tempted to lose hope, it helps to get into a conversation with the Lord, just like David. But we must remember that a true conversation is not one-sided. Rather than just "dumping" all of our troubles on Him and ending the communication at that point, we must give Him a chance to respond. We must humble ourselves before Him and cleanse our hearts of every motive that is not self-centered. Seeking only God's will or having faith that God hears our prayer, for the situation will bring about true relief from the distress of our situations and circumstances that we may find ourselves. Sometimes it's just a matter of finding a new or different perspective of our situation. Taking our own welfare out of the equation and looking at a problem from a different angle can help us see the answer, sometimes a very obvious answer that we missed because it was over shadowed by our concentration on the problem rather than a solution. He will supply that for us. Sometimes it's a matter of our own self-centeredness that keeps us from seeing the solution that God is offering by being determined that our solution is the only good solution, and we need to get out of the way of our problem so that together a solution can be found. God generally will not give us a solution to our issues without requiring some movement on our part. That movement would be toward having a committed intimate relationship with Him. We have to have faith that God will lead us to where He needs us.

17. To make your requests known to God. ***Matt. 21:22, "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*** Let's amplify these words to get a fuller meaning and insight to what Jesus is teaching us: *Likewise in all of the possible things that you should request of God, humbly ask Him as you would being an inferior man requesting from a superior Being, and ask for the particular thing in prayer to God, trusting in, relying on, and having faith that His will, will be done according to His power which reaches all things, and if you fulfill all of these things He will enable you to perform what so ever you desire and you will receive whatever you asked.* In this amplified version of this verse we have the ingredients to answered prayer. 1. We must recognize that He is God and as God know His attributes; omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, sovereign, merciful, gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger and rich in love. 2. When we pray, be specific; asking in a general way can leave room for doubt that your prayer was really



answered and not just a result of consequence. 3. We must believe that He hears and answers our prayer by trusting, relying, and having faith that the result is according to His will, even if we don't agree with the outcome. There are some things that remain now and will always remain a certainty when it comes to our requests of God. We must realize that God and only God is the agent that causes or allows all things to happen in our life. When we make requests of God the request must be in alignment with His character. We can't ask Him to do anything that is contrary to His character and if we ignorantly do pray that way we ask that He will point that out to us. He will not agree to do something that is contrary to His character or attributes. God does not grant requests that will hurt people or will violate His own nature and will. Although it is true that some people will be or have been hurt by His judgments this condition was not brought on as a result of a prayer request, but a result of their own actions. He was not promoting a "name it and claim it" theology in this verse. To be fulfilled, requests made of God in prayer must be in harmony with the principles of His kingdom. They also must be made in Jesus' name, that is, the request we are making must be the same request that Jesus Christ would make. Also when we make requests of God we must pray without doubt. On God's part all is certain, but on our part there must be trust, a true reliance or faith in that certainty. If doubt breaks this connection it can be considered an insult to God instead of honoring Him and His divine power and nothing will result. The mind must not be divided between the power and will of God, and the difficulties and discouragements which attends the situation. Not only is God's power available to us, but He expects us to make use of that power especially whenever the good of the souls of men are involved, the furthering of the gospel is possible, and the glory of God requires it. The stronger our faith, the more likely our prayers will be in union with Christ and in line with God's will; then God can grant our requests. Remember that we worship and praise a God that can do anything, even the things that seem humanly impossible, **Luke 18:27, But He said, "The things impossible with men are possible with God."**

18. To hear from God, **Proverbs 8:34, "Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at My doorposts."** When we look at the Hebrew to English meaning of these words, we understand more how God wants us to be attentive to what He has to say to us; *Wise is the person who understands about the Lord his God and how he is to respond to Him, who diligently pursues wisdom from sun up to sundown at the door of His lips, always being on one's watchful guard for the opening of His mouth.* This Proverb indicates that it is a wise person who holds himself close to and considers dear his relationship to God so that he does not miss anything that the Lord has to say. He does not want to miss a moment when God

opens His mouth, nor does he want to miss an opportunity to dwell near to God so that when His wisdom presents itself he will be in full view of this wisdom. Christ today speaks to us through His Word by way of His disciples and ministers, because hearing from someone who has a very intimate relationship with Christ is near to hearing from Christ Himself. These ministers have their commission from Him, they are His ambassadors and they personate Him. They receive their gifts from Him and speak according to His mind and will that is revealed in His word and preach Christ Himself. This shows with what attention and reverence the Gospel should be heard, what credit should be given to it and how it ought to be put into practice. But this comes with a warning also; it is ultimately our responsibility to make sure that what we are hearing comes from correct interpretation of the God's Word and that a personal opinion has not been included without being noted as such. We want to make sure that God's Word has not been "watered down" to make it more palatable, easier to swallow. Sometimes God has seen it necessary to be very direct and straight forward with us; even if it makes us uncomfortable! This accounts for the effectiveness of it on the souls of people; "it" being no other than the Word of Christ Himself speaking to each one of us; both on a personal level and as a church. To hear the gospel is the way to have knowledge of Christ and spiritual growth. It will cause an increase in faith in Christ, by knowing the joy of faith and love of Christ and abounding and overflowing in the faith, love, and joy of knowing Christ. His word is our spiritual nourishment and His food should be considered a privilege to partake of as persons who desire to hear the gospel since all of these things come through it. The gates of Wisdom's house are the church of Christ, sometimes referred to in the Scriptures as the Gates of Zion. The church, not as in a building but a body of believers, is the palace of a great King; it is an honor to be admitted there, to have a name and a place there and to sit with the King at His table. Here every believer watches for his spiritual edification and establishment in the truth. This should occur daily or day after day, one Lord's Day after another, taking advantage of all of the opportunities, in season and out of season consistent with the duties of their calling. Every day until the end of our life we are waiting at the door posts, early, to seek Christ and eager for instruction from Him. Or an allusion could be compared to that of any person seeking legal counseling who is anxiously waiting at the door of his lawyer for patronage and protection of the counselor in order to plead their cause for them. Christ is the wonderful Counselor, the Advocate with the Father, the Redeemer, mighty and strong, wanting to plead the cause for His people. Therefore it is right for us to wait at His doors, the source of our counsel and sound wisdom. So saints should wait at the throne of grace, upon the Word, upon our

answers to prayer, performances and promises, and above all the presence of Christ in revealing His direction and guidance in our life.

19. To be free from suffering and healed emotionally. **James 5:13, *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.*** It seems as though every time we get into a conversation about spiritual healing some controversy arises, (probably a distraction from Satan), but I hope that I can present a message of hope on this subject as we look at an amplified version of this verse; *Is there someone or other dwelling in your community and among you where suffering evil or afflictions is taking place? Let him pray to God, knowing that the prayers of a righteous man are effective. Does anyone have a cheerful mind? If so let him be called cheerful. Let him sing praises to God.* The closing verses of Chapter Five, in the book of James, contains the word “prayer” or “pray” seven times in seven verses. In every circumstance in life, we should go to the Lord in prayer. When in trouble, we should approach Him with an earnest appeal and praise. In time of rejoicing, we should lift our hearts to Him in praise. He wants to be brought into all the changing moods of our lives. We should see God as the One in control of everything that comes to us in life. We are defeated if we choose to be a victim of circumstance or if we just sit around and wait for our circumstances to change and not over-comers as Christ sees us. We should see no hand but His reaching out to us as our Savior to rescue us. Here are some Biblical truths about healing;
- a. Christians believe that all sickness is, in a general way, the result of sin in the world. If sin had never entered, there would be no sickness. This statement deserves some thought, but, in my opinion, all sickness originated from either disobedience to God or disrespect for His creation, brought on by the sin of Adam.
  - b. *Sometimes* sickness is a direct result of sin in a person’s life. In 1 Cor. 11:30, we read of certain Corinthians who were sick because they participated in the Lord’s Supper without judging sin in their lives, that is, without confessing and forsaking it, **1 Cor. 11:29, 30; *For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*** These verses, in their proper context are referring to not reverently taking the cup and bread at a communion service; but, even taken out of context it produces a truth in those times when we eat things that we know will either make us sick or cause a sickness to occur.
  - c. But at the same time, not all sickness is a direct result of sin in a person’s life. Job was sick in spite of the fact that he was a most righteous man, **Job 1:8; *And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For***

*there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.* The man born blind was not suffering from sins he had committed, *John 9:1-3; and as He passed by, He saw a man born blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him."* Epaphroditus was sick because of his tireless activity in the work of the Lord, *Phil. 2:30; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.* We can get sick when we over work ourselves.

- d. Sometimes sickness is a result of satanic activity. It was Satan who caused Job's body to be covered with boils *Job 2:7; Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.* It was Satan who crippled the woman in *Luke 13:10-17; And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "woman. You are freed from your sickness." And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God. And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, "there are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?" "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she have not been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.* So she was bent double, unable to straighten herself up: *This woman...whom Satan has bound, think of it, for eighteen years.* Proving that time is not an obstacle for God to heal and this should encourage us to persevere in praying for a healing. It's a good lesson for us to not let time be a barrier for us, to do the right thing, also. Just because something has been done a certain way for many years, or just because something has existed a certain way for many years, does not make it righteous. Paul had a physical

infirmity caused by Satan. He called it a ***“thorn in the flesh...a messenger of Satan to buffet me,” 2 Cor. 12:7; And because of the surpassing greatness of this revelation, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a torn in the flesh, a messenger sent to buffet me-- from exalting myself.***

- e. God can and does heal. In a very real sense, all healing is divine. One of the names of God in the OT is *Jehovah Ropheka*—***“the Lord who heals you,” Ex. 15:26; And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer.”*** We should acknowledge God in every case of healing. It is clear that God uses different means of healing. Sometimes He heals through the natural bodily process. He has placed within the human body tremendous powers of recuperation. Doctors know that most complaints are better by morning. Sometimes He heals through the knowledge of medicines. Paul advised Timothy, for instance, to ***“use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23)***. Sometimes He delivers us from underlying fears, resentments, self-preoccupation, and guilt, all of which produce illness. Sometimes He heals through physicians and surgeons. Jesus explicitly taught that sick people need a physician, ***Matt. 9:12; But when He heard this, He said, It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*** Of course in the context of this passage Jesus is using a metaphor to describe our sinful state and the moral healing that we need that comes from the forgiveness of our sin, but He is using a truism to make His point. Paul spoke of Luke as the “beloved physician,” ***Col. 4:14; Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.*** This certainly recognizes the need of doctors among Christians and more importantly that God can use doctors as a method of working His healing. God uses doctors in the ministry of healing. A famous French physician once said “the surgeon dresses the wound, God heals it.”
- f. But God also heals miraculously. The Gospels contain many illustrations of this. It would be incorrect to say that God generally heals in this way, but neither should we say that He never does. There is nothing in the Bible to discourage us from believing that God can heal miraculously today.
- g. Yet we must also be clear that it is not always God’s will to heal. Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus ***2 Tim. 4:20; Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*** If it were always God’s will to heal us, some

of us would never grow old or die and I hope that we can see that sometimes it is an act of His mercy that causes Him not to heal us, because God does not want us to be subjected to this present evil age anymore and dying is not a bad thing if we have been declared as righteous by Jesus Christ. ***Eccl. 7:1; A good name is better than a good ointment, and the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.*** This verse would give us the implication that dying is not always a bad thing to happen to us.

- h. God has not promised to heal in every case; therefore, healing is not something that we can demand from Him. In ***Phil. 2:27***, healing is spoken of as a mercy, not something which we have a right to expect, ***for indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.***
- i. While it is true in a general sense that healing is in the "Atonement," that eventually we will have bodies that are impervious to disease and injury, yet not all of the blessings that are in the Atonement, (the redeeming of mankind and the reconciliation of God with man, brought about by Jesus sufferings and death), have been given to us yet. For instance, the redemption of the body was included in Christ's work for us, but we will not receive it until Christ comes for His saints ***Rom. 8:23; And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*** At that time also we will be completely and finally healed of all diseases.
- j. It is not true that failure to be healed indicates a lack of faith. If it were, this would mean that some would live on indefinitely, but no one does. Paul, Trophimus, and Gaius, were not healed, and yet their faith was virile and active. Although it is true that faith is a necessary component to healing, not be healed is not necessarily an indication of a lack of faith.

Anytime that we pray, we should pray in faith, that is, in confidence that the Lord will hear our prayer and respond to it. In James it tells us to summon the elders of the church to pray for your cause also. One reason for this could be

<p>so join in with proper frame of mind appropriately. Also if this by the influence of the elder's sin and be healed, if not</p>	<p>that the petitioner can hear a righteous prayer, a prayer of faith, and them. In this attitude of prayer the petitioner will be in a to praise His name, and to reverence and glorify Him infirmity has been brought on by a particular sin, prayer, the man can ask for forgiveness for his physically, morally.</p>
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20. To resist temptation, **Matt. 26:41, keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.** Here is an important thought to keep in mind, if we believe that we can defeat temptation in our own strength we have already fallen into the temptation and given birth to the sin of pride. *Refrain from a figurative spiritual sleep by letting your mind wander to things of the flesh, and also keep praying to God to obtain good and avert evil, so that you may not enter into and fall for Satan's solicitation to sin; the immaterial nature of man that communicates with God is prone to be obedient and moral by God's standard, but the material nature is weak, frail, and imperfect, corrupt, both physically and morally.* These two words are very justly put together "watch and pray." There is and ought to be a "watching" before prayer and into it. We need to watch our motives for prayer in our heart, thoughts, and works and then watch for an answer to our prayer. The reason we need to watch for what we pray is to make sure that we do not fall into the temptation to pray for selfish things and to trust in the power of our God to accomplish our prayer requests. We should not be so focused on our will in prayer that we exclude His will, and all that will be done. If we become only focused on our will and our will is not accomplished it may have an adverse affect on our faith. This may cause us to fall into the temptation of not trusting in, relying on, or having faith in Jesus Christ to be able to accomplish what we have prayed. When Jesus returned to His disciples after praying, He found them sleeping. I almost certainly think that Jesus would've much rather have come back and seen them joining in their own prayer. They obviously did not see the importance of the event. Their spirits were willing to do the moral thing, but their flesh won them over. We need to be careful before we judge them for sleeping while our Lord prayed. When we think of our own prayer lives; we probably sleep better than we pray, and our minds can wander when they should be watching. In my own personal life, the times that I am tired are the times that I am the most vulnerable to fall into temptation. I need to dwell on God's desire for me and not the temptations of the flesh that want to win me over. Regeneration has produced the "renewed spirit" in us, a new divine life, conviction, and belief in the truth, that we call faith. This spirit is open to God's Holy Spirit and to Christ and thus ready to respond to their promises and directions. Every Christian has this experience or regenerated nature within them which has created the "spirit" that desires God's will for us. On the other hand, we still have to deal with the flesh part of ourselves or our old corrupt nature. The flesh obviously is opposed to the spirit and is in a constant battle to regain control of the body and soul. The very fact that the disciples were sleeping indicated that they were yielding to the flesh. We should not think that Jesus ever struggled with this battle. Is it true that Jesus was tempted?

Yes, He was, but the flesh was never taken into consideration by Him, for the very thought of giving in to the flesh would have been sinful and in Him there was no sin.

21. To be healed from distress, ***Psalm 107:19, Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.*** After reading this we will have to come to the conclusion that having stress in our lives is by our own choice and the only way to truly eliminate this stress is to trust in our Lord. *Then they cried out uttering sounds of, sorrow, distress, and alarm in their pain of affliction to the Lord, in their oppression that felt as though they were being hemmed in; He delivered them as they trusted in Him by bringing them to a place of safety and out of harm's way, out of their state of hopelessness, anxiety, and despair as out of a figurative narrow strait to the safety of a broad pasture.* Mentally they were caught up in their self-created stress, “they cried out uttering sounds of sorrow, distress, and alarm, physically they felt like they were “being hemmed in”, they were running out of options, but God answered their prayer of trust He “brought them to a place of safety, out of their state of hopelessness, anxiety, and despair.” He took them from metaphorically walking on the ledge of a cliff to walking in broad pastures, because of the faith that they had in Him. A time of affliction is a time of trouble, and a proper time for prayer. By it persons are brought to the throne of grace, where we are humbled under the mighty hand of God to seek for His relief. We are at a point where we realize that our life-style has finally brought us to a sense of sin and danger, and therefore we cry to the Lord for His mercy and pardoning grace. If you’ve ever been in a situation where there seems to be no hope that you will receive any end or relief to the distresses that are occurring in your life, you are exactly where God wants you! You are broken. Now God has you in a place where you will be certain that it was through Him that you were brought to safety because you have tried everything that you know of and got no results. The spirit that seeks to find its relief by works or self-preservation is not yet broken and when this relief comes you will know for sure that it came only by way of His intervention of mercy and grace in your life. Your faith and trust in Him needs to be elevated and you will speak of praises to Him sincerely and not just mechanically. Our spirit is not broken when we live our life only for the passing hour and ruin our health, living only for our family and in short for ourselves and everything that “belongs to us.” When our condition is as such the only possible outcome is that we are obliged to suffer by reason of or in consequence of our sin of lack of a saving faith and trust in Him. But we know and believe this, that even when the suffering we are going through is a consequence of our sin, if we fervently pray to Him, He will rescue us as our Savior. The key here is a “fervent” prayer. Fervent is defined in the Greek as continual, intense, and earnest and in another context, signifies the honorable emulation with



the consequent imitation of that which presents itself to the mind's eye as excellent. A fervent prayer would then be continual, not just a note or a short memo to God, but a continual prayer until you are satisfied that the prayer has been answered (not necessarily as you would desire it to be answered). It should be intense, meaning, undistracted "with your whole heart, mind, and soul." And it should be earnest, meaning that we know that our prayer is in alignment with God's will because of our research that we have done before hand. In the second context our prayer is seen by God as honorable, it is within the character and person of God, which presents itself to our mind and heart as excellent, as God would describe "excellent." When we apply either or both of these definitions to our prayer our prayer is appropriate for God to consider worthy.

22. To receive God's reward, ***Matt. 6:6, But when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*** This verse, amplified from the Greek, would read like this: *Also, so often as you pray to the Lord, go into your place of prayer, your place of privacy where you cannot be easily seen, and when you have closed your door, as a child of God pray to your Father where you cannot be seen by others; and your Father who understands what others cannot see will fulfill your expectations.* The motivation for us to pray should never be that we will be rewarded for our actions. Our motivation should be to want to have communion with an intimate friend. Any reward that we have coming we will receive in full when we are judged righteous and by His justice we know that whatever the reward it will be a just reward. The key to answered prayer is to do it in secret, i.e., go into your secret room and shut the door. And the implication here is that it is something that we should do on a regular basis. If our real motive is to get through to God, He will hear and answer. We shouldn't read into this passage that public prayer is not as effective. The early church met for collective prayer. Jesus Christ Himself prayed publically in the synagogues, even mentioning that wherever two or more are gathered in His name, the prayer will be effective. The point is not where we pray. At issue here is why we pray—to be seen by people or to be heard by God, free from distraction and free from the temptation of trying to impress people by the words or how we pray. A private room is fit for private meditation and prayer. Some persons' prayer is limited to *only* praying in public so this can be considered an exhortation to pray additionally in private. When we pray privately we are less inclined to pray pride-fully, hypocritically, or vainly. When we approach the Father in prayer we should want to do it with a true heart, in faith and reverence, through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man. Jews believe that a righteous man's voice should not be heard in prayer, but he should pray silently and

this is a prayer that will be answered. When we pray in secret to the Father, the One who can see our heart; will keep the secrets of our prayer.

23. To withstand evil, ***Eph. 6:13; Therefore take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*** We are easy prey for Satan if we try to defend ourselves against him on our own or without God's protection, let's amplify this verse to get the full point of it: *Thus throughout your life take up and bear the offensive and defensive spiritual armor of God, so that you have the ability to continually resist the enemy and his influences, whether in deed or word, during this present morally wicked and corrupt period of time, and also having carried out this task until it is finished, continue to stand fast against the enemy and endure.* When Paul wrote this verse he very possibly was in prison guarded by a Roman soldier in full armor. He thus made the analogy of spiritual armor. We are flanked by formidable foes in the spirit realm; either the demons themselves or person's influenced by them. Being "flanked" by our enemy is a military term that means that we are being attacked from a position that is vulnerable and not easily defended. Our only hope of entering into battle with them and surviving is to wear the full armor of God, i.e., truth, righteousness, preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, and the word of God. Thus, when the battle reaches its fullest intensity and the smoke of the battle has cleared, we will be found still standing. We may become battered and bruised, but we still have life and can claim the victory. The evil day that Paul refers to is this present evil age, filled with the corruption of immorality and all sorts of wickedness. Everyone seems to be doing what they see as right in their own eyes instead of concerning themselves with what God desires for them. Satan's attacks, it seems at times, comes in waves. If we could envision a huge battering ram, that swings on a pendulum, battering against a huge wooden gate that has been secured, it would probably closely resemble what our attacks are like. Just when we think we can take a rest from the battle we get smacked again with another blow, seemingly more fierce than the first, and it comes again progressively trying different spots, in an attempt to wear us down to a point where we relent. But in the armor of God we have what we need to withstand the barrage of Satan's power and might, able to oppose his schemes and resist his temptations. We don't need to fear him, respect him yes, but fear him no, because we can, with the array of the armor of God, be conquerors. Protected and covered by the blood of Christ we are overcomers!
24. To have joy, ***John 16:24, until now you have asked for nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.*** In praying for joy we have to first realize where our joy comes from; not what makes a happy, but what gives us an attitude of joy: *Up until this certain point you have not made a supplication for*

*anything as My representative or by My authority; make a supplication as My representative and by My authority from now on and you will be provided for, so that your exaltation of great joy in salvation for mankind that I have prepared for you may accomplish its end.* This verse would imply that up until now the disciples of Jesus had never prayed to the Father in Jesus Christ's name. The implication is not that the disciples never prayed before now, for as we read on in the Gospels we see that they asked Jesus how to pray and He did teach them. They prayed to Him for an increase in faith among other things. But what they may not have done is to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. He now invites them to do so. This may be because up until now they did not know how to appropriately pray in Christ's name and after some time of instruction by Jesus He felt they now understood the full meaning of standing in the presence of the Father as a representative of Jesus Christ. They were now ready to pray faithfully, and appropriately. This same scenario is true for us also as His living disciples. The fulfillment of the promises of OT had arrived in Jesus; in a few hours from this time the "new covenant" would be sealed with the blood of Jesus. They were begging to see through to end or the fruition of what Jesus was teaching them as far as the necessity of His atoning death and resurrection and the power there in.

25. To get intimately close to God, ***Isaiah 64:7, and there is no one who calls on Thy name. Who arouses himself to take hold of Thee; For Thou hast hidden Thy face from us, And hast delivered us into the power of our iniquities.*** I believe that the one thing we must do before we can understand the relation of intimacy (or lack thereof), to this verse is to understand the meaning of the word "intimacy." Interestingly enough I could not find a Greek definition of "intimacy," however I did find a Hebrew definition which does fit here very nicely. When used as a verb it has the meaning of *to know*, (we want to know all we can about Him and we can accomplish this through dialogue with Him), *to learn* (we want to keep learning about Him and we can accomplish this through Bible Study and listening to good preaching, we will never know all there is to know about Him), *to perceive*, (we want to perceive in our mind who He is and what He has done for us, does for us, and will do for us), *to discern*, ( We want to be able to discern His voice form the voice of the enemy and to know what is morally good as opposed to what is morally bad), *to experience*, (we want to experience everything that He is in our daily living and realize that He is active in our daily life), *to confess*, (we want to know what it means to confess Him as our Lord and allow Him to edit our life), *to consider*, (we want to consider His knowledge, wisdom, and understanding in our decisions and use Him s our role model). Then the same thing applies to the people around us; *to know people relationally, to know how, to be skillful, to be known, to make ones-self*

*known, to make to know.* The simple meaning, “to know”, is its most common translation out of the eight-hundred or more uses. One of the primary uses means “to know relationally and experientially;” this applies to God as well as people; it refers to knowing or not knowing persons personally or by reputation. The word also refers to knowing a person sexually. It might even be used in the context of knowing or not knowing God or foreign gods. But it especially signifies knowing what to do or think in general especially with respect to God. One of the most important uses is depicting God’s knowledge of people; the Lord knows their hearts entirely. God knows the suffering of His people and He cares. **Job 19:14** is used as an example of using this word in this context; ***my relatives have failed, and my intimate friends have forgotten me.*** “Intimacy” can also be used as a noun that has the meaning of “counsel.” Confidentiality is at the heart of this term, such as information shared in confidence should remain confidential. Elsewhere, this term reflects a more general meaning of counsel, which is viewed as necessary in successful planning. Job used this term to refer to his close friendship with God and with individuals he thought of as being close friends. David used this term to describe one of his friendships. God establishes a close, intimate relationship with those who revere Him and walk uprightly. **Prov. 3:32; for the crooked man is an abomination to the Lord; but He is intimate with the upright.** Everything that we said about us having an intimate relationship with God, also applies in reverse. But, doesn’t God already know everything about us? Yes, this is true, but it is for our benefit to confess to Him who we are so that we can humbly be molded into who He wants us to be through the renewing of our spirit. In a third context it is also used as a noun indicating a person closely related to someone and having the right as kinsman redeemer. It has the sense of a close, intimate friend or relative as in **Prov. 7:4; say to wisdom, you are my sister, and call understanding your intimate friend.** And finally it has the context of being “docile;” tame, friend, intimate, chief, or captain. It connotes the closest of companions; **Prov. 17:9; He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.** So, with these definitions in mind let’s amplify the verse from Isaiah: *And there is no one who uses the strength or power of the Lord to summon Him by His good name, character, and reputation. No one who stirs himself to faithful action by being strong and of good courage that comes from You; Because You have prevented us from seeing the secret things known only to You by removing Your presence from us, And have caused us to melt away into the power of our deliberate twisting and perverting of our guilt and sin.* This verse in context, take place in time when Israel’s sins had become full, i.e., they could no longer go on in their sinful ways of life without receiving God’s judgment for their sin. They lost their desire for whatever intimacy they had with Him. He could see there was no

hope of their turning back to Him. They were carried off into exile, where they sank deeper and deeper in their moral corruption. They joined themselves to the heathens in their idol worship and they are now about to join them in their judgment. This is not just a lesson of history, the same situation exists today. This is the result of not desiring an intimate relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. He will release us to the desires of our flesh and our will and we will drift further and further away from communion with Him. At this point, when Christ sees that there is no hope of our turning back toward Him, He abandons us to the consequences of our actions and the punishment of our sins. My personal opinion is that we would be in awe if we had the slightest hint of how often He saves us from the consequences of our sin; either saving us entirely or saving us from the full intensity, every day. Of course He saves us from any consequence of our sin at judgment by virtue of His saving work at Calvary, but I believe He does so on a daily basis also. The God that some people are turning their back on is a God that is gracious, merciful, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, all sufficient; desiring an intimate relationship with us, a God of hearing and answering prayer. Our Lord Jesus Christ, is our mediator to the Father, and is a person that you should want to have a close intimate relationship with and does not want to be taken for granted. His name should be mentioned in all of our prayers because our acceptance by Him. It is only through Him that our favors are conveyed to the Father. Faith in prayer is the "taking and holding onto of the hands of God," as in this verse, which Isaiah says there is no one that does so. He does not use these hands to strike His children, but for encouragement to persevere and for intimacy; as a friend may grab a hold of a father's hand when he is about to give his child a whack for his correction. We as God's people are sometimes asleep, concerning the importance of prayer and intimacy; and even though we can see that it is high time that someone wakes up, no one does, as is referenced in the Gospels when Jesus went off to pray and the disciples chose to sleep rather than to pray with Him. None of those, who are consumed with our fulfilling of the desires of the flesh, seek His intimacy or face (direction) and favor. We have to choose which path we are going to take; Him or our flesh. **Matt. 6:24; No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**

26. To have peace. Paul always has great words of wisdom for us that we can all agree with; however, applying them to our lives seems to be the difficult part. **Phil 4:6, 7; Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in**

**Christ Jesus.** *Take care and don't be troubled by any perceived deficiency in your living conditions or who you are in the flesh; but do not have a divided mind, that is, worldly vs. godly, but in all things and in all respects by prayer to God make known your particular needs; with an attitude of fellowship and gratitude let your petitions be made known to God. And if you do this the peace of mind and tranquility that arises from your reconciliation with God, will give you a sense of divine favor, which extends over and is superior to all things that your intellect comprehends; and He shall preserve your spiritual desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses and your understanding against worldly attitudes values by means of our intimate union with Christ and faith in Him.* I personally like verses that tell us what to do to remedy a situation or circumstance and then tell us what the outcome will be or what we can expect if we are obedient to what the Scripture tells us. Is it really possible for a Christian to be anxious for nothing? It is possible as long as we have the resource of believing prayer. Believing prayer is prayer that we trust in, rely on and have faith in that it will be heard by the Father and that He will respond according to His will. The rest of the paragraph that includes verses 8 and 9 goes on to explain how our lives can be free from spiritual fretting; ***Phil. 4:8, 9; Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, (or lovable), whatever is of good repute, (or, attractive), if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, (or ponder these things); and the God of peace shall be with you.*** Everything should be taken to the Lord in prayer. When we say "everything" we mean to say it all inclusively. There is nothing too great or too small for His loving care. Prayer is both an act of the heart and an attitude of the mind. We come to the Lord at specific times and bring specific requests before Him. But it is also possible to live in an atmosphere of prayer. It is possible that the mood of our life should be a prayerful mood. Perhaps the word for prayer in this verse signifies an overall attitude in our life, whereas supplication signifies the specific requests which we bring to the Lord. But then we should notice that our requests should be made known to God with thanksgiving. Someone once said that we should be "anxious for nothing, prayerful in everything, and thankful for anything." If these attitudes characterize our lives, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Our minds and hearts will be guarded against the temptation to get stressed out over a situation. We will be guarded against an anxious worry for worldly things and an immoderate concern for the things of life that arise from negligence of our faith in God. The peace of God is a sense of holy restoration and an excessive satisfaction and pleasure in our spiritual status which floods us when

we are leaning on God. We become so trusting and have so much faith that living becomes pleasurable and we feel a flood of satisfaction because those things that used to cause us to worry are no longer noticeable in our lives. This kind of peace surpasses our understanding. People of the world cannot understand it at all, and even Christians possessing it find a wonderful element of mystery about it. They are filled with wonderment over their own lack of anxiety in the face of things that used to cause them every kind of worry. This peace guards our heart, keeps it in check against any attack that tries to draw our attention away from the source of this new found peace, which is Jesus Christ. Only a thankful heart can be a joyful heart and only disobedience to this verse can steal that joy! Without thankfulness for what God has already given us, how can we ask Him for more? The life blood of all prayer is thankfulness. We can't be grateful believers and at the same time be filled with unbelief, so if we maintain an attitude of gratitude we will cover a multitude of essentials for appropriate prayer. One of the reasons that I did a study on prayer was because of my concern that all of my prayers were beginning to sound alike; the last prayer I prayed sounded much like the preceding twenty prayers. I wanted to know if that was appropriate. What I'm finding out is that my words are not as important as the attitude of my heart—it's my heart that brings appropriateness in prayer.

People can engage in these kinds of appropriate prayer that are listed anywhere and at any time, ***Acts 10:9; and on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.*** Peter did not seem to have any qualms about when he prayed or where he prayed, let's take a deeper look at this verse and see if we can adopt this attitude for our own prayer life: *Also, on the next day, as they were traveling on their way, and they were coming near to the city, Peter left them, as they were preparing food, to elevate himself on the housetop of Simon's house at about noon to pray to God.* I don't know if Peter was like me in that if I were walking a long ways there would be times of not having much conversation. During these times I would do a lot of thinking and imagining, some of it harmless while other imaginings would be sinful. The way to avoid these sinful imaginings would be to involve myself in prayer at every opportunity and these long walks would certainly give me plenty of opportunities. I'm not saying that this was the case with Peter, but it is true that to avoid sinful temptation prayer is a good companion.

Peter and his companions had made good time on their journey to Joppa. They started at three o'clock the previous afternoon and it was now noon the next day, they had covered a distance of about 24 miles, by foot, even through the night. We can certainly understand how that kind of traveling could make a person hungry, so they stopped to eat at an acquaintance's house before entering the city to do ministry. The food was already in the process of being

prepared by the persons in the house. Peter goes up to the house top to pray because it is probably a quiet place and noon was a time that Jews regularly prayed. **Luke 5:16; But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. Luke 6:12; and it was at this time that He went off to the mountains to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. Luke 18:10; Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-collector. 1 Tim. 5:5; Now she who is a widow indeed, and who has been left alone has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day).** In addition to developing the habit of speaking to God freely regardless of time or place, believers should set aside certain times when they can be alone with God and pray. Even Jesus recognized the need to set times of prayer, **Matt. 14:23, and after He had sent the multitude away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.** This verse amplified would read like this: *And so later on, after He had dismissed the great crowds, He ascended by Himself from the lower place where He was to a higher place on the mountain to pray to God; and by the time sunset approached He was there alone.* It can be assumed, I think, that Jesus seen a greater need for prayer than those whom He was teaching, by the way the crowds all disappeared while He was still involved in prayer. So this begs the question of us; would we follow Jesus to prayer or follow the crowd that dispersed? What we do on Sundays after services will give us our answer!

The serious turn which was now taking place in the affairs of Jesus life explains His dismissal of the multitude and His ascent into some lonely spot to spend hours in prayer. On the very next day most of that same multitude that crowded around Him and could not get enough of His teaching, turned against Him. He even asked the twelve if they also wanted to leave, if the cost of His discipleship was too much to bear. When John refers to this verse he actually writes that He had to flee to a place alone. In my *opinion* the disposition of the followers that were with Him on the mountain caused the immediacy of Jesus seeing a need for prayer for them. That multitude wanted to make Him a king; interestingly enough that also was a temptation of Satan during the 40 day fast. Sending the crowd away was a way of dismissing the temptation. In **Luke 4:13; and when the devil had finished every temptation he departed from Him until an opportune time,** I think we may overlook the “opportune time” part of this verse. Satan never gave up in trying tempting Jesus to sin; if he could’ve gotten Jesus to sin it would’ve been a great victory for him. I think that many of us think that the tempting was over after the attempts in the desert, but, in my opinion the crowd wanting to make Jesus an earthly king is probably only one example of many that shows us that Satan does not give up on anybody, not even Christ, and this may have been one of those “opportune times” mentioned in Luke’s Gospel. However, His praying to the Father was perfect, pure, and exalted communion with the Father.



A person may pray in any position, such as standing or kneeling, with hands stretched out or hands lifted up, with head bowed or with head lifted up. The body position really is not relevant. **Dan. 6:10** *Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house(now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously. Mark 1:35; and in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there. John 11:41; And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me."* Translated from the Greek this verse could read like this: *therefore the Jews lifted up the stone used to cover the entrance to the tomb. And Jesus elevated His line of sight to where the stone was and said these words, "Father, I am grateful that You effectually heard Me so as to perform what I requested.* The key words in this translation is "effectually heard Me." In other words Jesus' prayer was appropriate for the time, place, and the situation, which of course, all of His prayers were appropriate. The Father hears and understands all of our words when we pray in a physical sense, but these words are not always effective because they have some indication of self serving in them. Do we want someone raised from the dead because we don't like being sad or we miss the person? Do we want to be healed from physical maladies because we don't like pain? Do we want God to bail us out of certain situations because we don't like being embarrassed or paying consequences for our actions? The sole purpose of these prayers is to make our life more comfortable. These prayers or words in the form of prayers are likely not going to be effective. Effective prayer will be motivated by having an opportunity of giving glory to God.

The stone that covered the entrance of the tomb, to prevent any acts of vandalism and/or acting as a seal to prevent the stench of death from leaking out, was removed at Jesus' command. Before performing the miracle Jesus thanked His Father for having heard His prayer. Doubtless He had been speaking to the Father continually during His ministry and had prayed that God's name might be glorified in the resurrection of Lazarus. Here He thanked the Father in anticipation of the event. Do we have that kind of faith that we can thank the Father for answering our prayers before the answer comes? Hannah prayed to have a son; **1 Sam. 1:26;** *and she said, "Oh my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord.* Solomon prayed that God would keep the promises made to Moses; **1 Kings 8:54;** *And it came about when Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and supplication to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven.* Elijah prayed that a sign would come that he was the true prophet of God; **1 Kings 18:42;** *so Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees.* Ezra prayed that the Israelites would return to the Lord; **Ezra 9:5;** *But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation (or fasting)even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on*

***my knees and stretched out my hands to the Lord my God.*** Paul prayed that the Ephesians would come to know the love of Christ; ***Eph. 3:14; for this reason I bow my knees before the Father.*** Paul prayed that his disciples could live a good and tranquil life; ***1 Tim. 2:8; therefore I want the men in every place to pray lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.***

Praying in faith does not mean that there is no need for persistence in prayer. We should never see ourselves as being pesky to God, as we think of a toddler that persistently nags until he gets his way with his parents. On the contrary faith involves perseverance. Here in this context we define persistence as *to continue in any state or course, to be constant, to persevere in*, and perseverance as: *a quality of character that does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial*. So when we pray persistently and persevere in our prayer we pray constantly and continually staying the course until we are sure that we can see that God has responded to our prayer. Our character is of such that that we do not surrender to the desires of our flesh to quit or give up because of a change in circumstances or that we can see that the enemy is working against us causing us to doubt the effectiveness of our prayer. Believers do not have to beg from a God who is unwilling to give; never the less they pray constantly, since their prayers are an expression of their unwavering faith. Persevering can be defined as simply a “continuance in something and it includes the elements of patience, tolerance, and diligence.” Begging on the other hand expresses the idea of a lack, a deficiency, being miserable and pitiful. It was interesting to me to find out that the Greek language does not have a word for beggar in the context that we use it in English and when we see it in the translations of the Bible it is a sort of misappropriation of the word. The definition that the Bible gives as a beggar would not be one that we would recognize as a beggar. The Bible defines it as an inferior asking or seeking from a superior, such as a child to an adult, or a man to God. In my mind begging has a negative connotation of “annoyance” attached with its definition, but this is not how it is used in the NT. Christians know that their heavenly Father will supply His children’s needs, so there is no need for begging, (as we understand begging).

***Mark 14:38; “Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”*** Amplified from the Greek to English this verse could read like this: *Continually keep on the alert and praying to God, so that you may not enter into a state of trial in which God brings His people through adversity and affliction in order to encourage and prove their faith and confidence in Him; our feelings, disposition, and state of mind is ready and willing to move in a forward direction toward God, but our material nature is frail, weak, and imperfect both physically and morally and unequal to the task*. This translation of this verse can be somewhat confusing when we think about the teaching especially in James where he teaches us that trials are good for us because with the right attitude it can make our spirit stronger and help us to defeat temptations that originate from our inappropriate appetites. But the trials that God allows us to go through are managed by God in that He knows

what trials can be useful to us and which ones are of no use to us, either because we are not yet at a point in our sanctification process that we can make them useful or some trials are just plain intended to make us fall and have no value at all. We need to allow God to decide what trials we go through and not go looking ourselves to find ones that we are daring enough to take on, not knowing if we can resist it or not. We should not feed the “temptation beast” because it can reach further than we think and it may bite us! Like teasing a mad dog with piece of steak—if we step over the line of safety the result is not going to be good!

In this verse Jesus is trying to keep the disciples on the alert against temptations. The great need, at this time of Jesus’ betrayal is for His disciples to be awake and to be able to use their senses to call on God to keep and protect them in the trial that is about to come upon them, as the mob that has formed is about to take Jesus into custody. But His call was in vain. The substance of their praying must be final and state the purpose of their watching and praying; “that you may not come into temptation.” Jesus is referring to a damaging actual entrance. In the Greek the rest of this verse is neatly balanced out but the English suffers in this balance. “The spirit in them is eager and ready, but the body is weak,” which reveals their situation exactly. All true disciples are no longer simple but decidedly complex personalities. The spirit in them is one of regeneration that has produced a new divine life or a new faith if you wish. This spirit is open to God and to Christ and full of readiness to defend any attack. Every Christian, at some time has had these same feelings, but we also still have to contend with the flesh in us, which is in opposition to the spirit; that old sinful nature that we will carry with us until our death, even after our conversion. The flesh opposes the spirit, in fact, would like to oust the spirit and regain complete control of the person. These two are in a constant battle with each other, each trying to oust the other. When Jesus says that the flesh is weak He speaks of it from the standpoint of the spirit by thinking of how both react in a time of temptation. The spirit is eager to endure, to overcome the temptation, but the flesh in us is weak, utterly helpless in temptation, you might even say that it is a drag and a handicap to the spirit in us. By calling on His disciples to watch and pray Jesus seeks to energize their spirit into full activity. By sleeping and by giving way to sleep they are yielding to the flesh. **Luke 11:5-13, And He said to them, “suppose that one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and from inside he shall answer and say, ‘do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. “And I say to you, ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?” “Or if he asks for an**

**egg, he will not give him a scorpion will he? “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Luke 18:1-8, Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. “And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ “And for a while he was unwilling; but afterwards he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the righteous judge said; now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Eph. 6:18; with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. Col. 4:2; Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. 1 Thess. 1:2; we give thanks to the Lord always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers. 1 Thess. 5:17; pray without ceasing. We should never give up on God responding to our prayer.**

In summary, when we pray to God, we should desire that He would intervene to permit something in our lives that He feels is proper and right. Sometimes that is as simple as asking Him to *create a desire* in you. If we are honest before God we will confess that we know that there are some things that are good for us that we have no desire for yet, so we pray to have the desire to seek out those things that are mentioned in Phil. 4:8; whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute. There is no reason that He would not give to us abundantly the good desires. For the Christian, every prayer ought to be the result of his faith in God through Christ. In the NT, faith is defined as the acceptance of God’s revelation for man and the means whereby that revelation for each individual is appropriated. In other words we accept what God reveals to us as being true and we appropriate it for our life because we trust in it and we rely on it as being the truth. A Christian’s desire should be for God’s will to take place in his life, even in the case of sickness. It is of such a desire coming from faith that James spoke about it in regard to a sick brother. In praying for the sick, we must exercise faith that God is able to heal, and we are free to express our desire for the healing of the sick. However, once we have expressed our desire, we must allow God to do as He wills and pleases and in that we find our satisfaction in faith. In other words we should not let doubt enter in to our prayer in an attitude of thinking that we must talk God into something that He doesn’t seem to be doing, but continue to trust in His will as being omniscient and righteous. We can always trust that we worship a righteous God and in so doing we are assured that everything He does is the right thing. If He answers our prayer in a way that is not specifically what we asked for or desired the time will come when we will see and agree with Him that He did do the right thing.