

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
September 29, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Introduction... Why study many of the prayers of the Bible?

1. I do this because I feel a great sense of lack in my own life in this regard. I want to understand more the ministry, the power, and the necessity of prayer. I sense that this lack is a common problem among most Christians. In fact, I would like to ask you to indicate by a raised hand how many of you feel that your prayer life lacks something.

God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause on prayer. The condition was put in the very existence of God's cause in this world. Ask of Me is the one condition God puts in the very advance and triumph of His cause.

Men are to pray for the advance of God's cause. Colossians 4:2. To a prayerful man God is present in realized force; to a prayerful Church God is present in glorious power, and the Second Psalm is the Divine description of the establishment of God's cause. The nations are incensed with bitter hatred against His cause. God is described as laughing at their hate.

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot I vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'

He who sits in heaven laughs; the LORD holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in His wrath, saying, 'As for me, I have I set My King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are My Son; today I have I begotten you.'"

But then He says reaffirming a pattern for prayer He set in place from the beginning...

Ask of Me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; and you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Psalm 2:1-9

Ask of Me is the condition of a praying people who are willing and obedient. And men shall pray for Him continually. Under this universal and simple promise men and women of old laid themselves out for God. They prayed and God answered their prayers, and the cause of God was kept alive in the world by the flame of their praying.

Prayer became a settled conditioned once again when Jesus commanded. *"Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened."*

2. What do you remember from your childhood about prayer?
3. Who taught you to pray? What did they teach you?

C. Prayer is hard work. Rom. 8:26

1. What things make prayer hard for you? Why is such a “simple” thing... like talking to God often so difficult?
2. What difference does prayer make in your life?
3. How would you respond to this statement: *“The most intimate communion with God comes only through prayer”*?
4. Since God knows everything anyway, why do we need to pray?
 - a. **Because he commands it...**
 - b. **Because it is good for us...**
 - c. **Wait a minute, how about...because He desires us to do so...He delights in our prayers...it brings Him joy when we talk with Him. This aspect of the reason why we pray is often overlooked...we are a treasured possession, a people holy to our God, and He delights in us so He delights and desires to hear from us.**
5. As hard as it can be, why are we drawn to prayer? Foxhole prayers....prayers of desperation? Why do we keep trying? Luke 18:1

D. Getting Started- *“We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God.”* – Westminster Larger Cat. Q/A 185... Question 186: *“What rule has God given for our direction in the duty of prayer?”* Answer: *“The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of prayer...”*

1. How good a theologian must you be to pray “good prayers”?
2. Where do “Good Prayers” come from? **Col. 3:16-The word of Christ dwelling richly within us.**
3. Are there rules to follow in prayer? What are some of them?
 - a. **Pray according to His Word...**
 - b. **Always to pray in a Trinitarian manner...**
 - c. **Always for the glory and honor of God....**
 - d. ?
4. Who designed prayer? What is its purpose? How would you define prayer?
 - a. Richard Pratt- “A believer’s communication with God.”
 - b. Steve Brown- “The communion, communication, and the contact between creature and Creator. It is an expression of a relationship between two persons; One who is infinite and one who is finite.”
 - c. Westminster Larger Cat Q?A 178- “What is prayer? Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of His Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.”

- E. Next week we will begin looking at the prayers of the Bible to see if we can see the patterns for prayer that God expects from His people.
- F. Quotes on prayer:
1. *"If prayer is the greatest achievement on earth, we may be sure it will call for a discipline that corresponds to its power."*- **Samuel Chadwick**
 2. *"The Christian's trade is prayer."*- **Martin Luther**
 3. *"The strongest one in Christ's kingdom is he who is the best knocker"....E.M. Bounds...What do you think?*
 4. *"Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness."*- **Phillips Brooks**
 5. *"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for a task equal to your power. Pray for power equal to the task."*- **Phillip Brooks**
 6. *"...and these two things, prayer and the study of the Word of God, always go hand-in-hand, for there is not true prayer without the study of God's Word, and there is not true study of the Word of God without prayer."*- **R.A. Torrey**

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
October 6, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Why does God the Father encourage us, His children to “Ask of Me”?
 - a. **Confession of our need for Him.**
 - b. **He desires to speak to us.**
 - c. **Loves to communicate...staying connected to His own .**
 - d. **So that we will seek closeness ...crawling into His lap for security and freedom.**

2. Are there rules to follow in prayer? What are some of them?
 - a. **Pray according to His Word...**
 - b. **Always pray in a Trinitarian fashion...**
 - c. **Always for the glory and honor of God...**
 - d.

C. 1st prayer of the Bible? Genesis 3:8-13

1. What is something different we see here in this text that has not happened before up to this point?
 - a. **This is the 1st dialogue between God and man recorded in Scripture. Therefore, it is essential then to see dialogue as an essential part of prayer.**
 - b. **This is sort of like the conversation that Vince Lombardi used to have every year on the first day of training camp. “Men, this is a football!”**
 - c. **Prayer, then, is most simply conversation with God.**

2. What are the characteristics of this conversation that are true of all prayer?
 - a. **The beginning of prayer is “*But the Lord God called to the man...*” God has initiated the conversation in His Word...we are to carry it on. Another reason why being in His Word is so crucial...you want to hear God you hear Him when you are walking with Him in the Word. God beckons His people to converse with Him throughout Scripture. When He speaks of “*walking in His ways*” it is reminiscent of Adam and Eve walking with God in the garden. We must think every time we go to Scripture that we are hearing God speak to us...the Word and prayer go together. Remember this quote from last time? “...and these two things, prayer and the study of the Word of God, always go hand-in-hand, for there is not true prayer without the study of God’s Word, and there is not true study of the Word of**

God without prayer."- R.A. Torrey. **God is the one that has planted the desire to pray and we are responding to that desire placed in us.**

- b. It is between 2 people...Adam and God...then Eve and God. True prayer is always between 2 people... no one else. Others may be present, as in this account...there may be 200 hundred or 20 plus like this morning here in church...but real prayer is always a conversation between a single human being and God Himself.**
 - c. Have to be truthful and honest. Adam and eve both are compelled to answer honestly and truthfully.**
 - d. We are coming to a loving Father...the opposite reaction we see here is a product of sin...so before sin the opposite would be true...they would have looked at coming into God's presence with desire and delight. "As they heard...", seems to indicate that there may have even been a set time...at the very least, they were anticipating the LORD's coming to walk in the garden because that was His habit... "...in the cool of the day..." seems to indicate a relaxed and unpressured time.**
 - e. They were relaxed in prayer coming to the one in whom we can trust.**
 - f. Confession is a necessary component to our prayers...even though Adam would become irreverent he openly confesses before God in vs. 8.**
 - g. Adam speaks matter-of-factly to God...in this case irreverently, blaming God and the woman for his problems. What does this communicate to us negatively? We should never presume when it comes to God...or fault Him...or question His action as if testing God. Positively? God wants us to speak to Him naturally...no reason trying to keep your feeling hidden for He knows them...if you are upset with His actions...or are seeking clarification...or just simply Why?...God wants us to issue our emotions...He has broad shoulders...see the Psalmists, but we are to do so knowing that He is God and He is our Father...so a certain amount of respect and honor are needed...reading His Word lets us know the proper balance of fear and liberty in how to approach God. In His Word we see how to approach Him in prayer whether that be through repentance, confession, praise, thanksgiving, lament, supplication or intercession...but fundamental to them all is the conversation a dialogue between you and God.**
3. What has sin done to this simple act between God and man?
- a. Caused them to dread being in God's presence... There was a time when they looked forward to God's presence, but not now. Not since sin has entered into the world. I find it to be remarkable that the first conversations/ prayers aren't recorded till after the Fall. It seems now since sin has**

entered in they do not want to talk with Him. Do not want to pray.

- b. Sins changed the comfort and security they experienced in God's presence to insecurity and fear.**
 - c. They were afraid of talking with Him.**
 - d. Sin changed the content of what they now will be talking about.**
 - e. Sin caused them to turn to other things, anything , even to hiding, rather than being in God's presence.**
 - f. They are ashamed of their nakedness and they are feeling guilt for what they have done. When we are about to be caught how do we often act? We seek to hide in some way...either physically as our children or we seek to deny any wrong doing ...which is a form of hiding the truth. And lastly just like Adam and Eve we seek to blame- shift.**
 - g. Prayer/conversation becomes hard...what was once a pleasant experience now is hard because it reminds us of how inferior we are and how much in need of God we are.**
 - h. Caused them to be informal and irreverent...being belligerent, unthankful and accusatory towards God and His way. Adams heart becomes hard for a time.**
 - i. Caused them not to want to be together...making it hard for intimacy between the man and the woman emotionally, spiritually or physically.**
- 4. What is God's response to their sin?**
- a. He comes to them... He knew they had sinned but He came...**
 - b. He had been with them before the Fall and He continued to desire that relationship but there would be consequences even after they were forgiven.**
 - c. He is the only One who could bridge the gulf between God and man because man was seeking to run away, not come to God...an indication that without the LORD's initiative man would never seek God on his own.**
 - d. He asks questions.**
- 5. Why does God ask them questions?**
- a. Just so we are clear, God does not ask these questions because He doesn't know the answers...He does. He never questions us for His benefit or out of curiosity.**
 - b. To get them talking through what they had done. We ask our kids similar questions in order to get them to come to grips with what they have done and to seek forgiveness for such wrongs. With God in His Word we find these questions in the form of illustrations, examples, events that cause us to look at ourselves and our sins and seek His forgiveness, grace and mercy.**

6. How do the questions of God help us today in how we should think about prayer? Let's look at them separately.
- a. **God's 1st question so important to our day to day existence. "Where are you?"...in this sin filled world this question teaches us that we always need to be asking the question of ourselves where am I? Am I walking with the LORD or am I walking on my own? Teaching us we need to be evaluating our lives and praying to God about the answer we come up with. Adam must have struggled within himself with the answer. But then he answers honestly, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself." This was an honest answer to God's question...a confession of sorts...it is as if he was beginning to grasp the enormity of the situation and his separation from the God who just the day before he was delighting to be in the presence of.**
 - b. **The next question is "Who told you that you were naked?" In other words, "who are you listening to?" God had not told them they were naked...it had not mattered, but now they were listening to another voice and that voice has brought on the shame, fear and separation. We are to be mindful of the voices we listen to and how they match up to what God is saying...of course, that requires us to be people of God's Word so we know what God is saying. If and when we listen to the voices of the world we are confused, distracted, and led astray. Voices that tell us we deserve more...we have been cheated by others that is why they have more...we can do it better ourselves...no one can tell us anything. We must understand how important it is to reject the voices that speak anything different from God's Word. In prayer we must repent of the influences of the world and ask God to see and hear Him speak to us.**
 - c. **The 3rd question was, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I have commanded you not to eat?" In prayer we need to constantly ask ourselves do we know God's Word and are we living by that Word. This simple question speaks directly to our walking and living as God prescribes. This also gets to the heart of what the man has done in disobeying His God and listening to a voice other than God's and choosing that voice over God. And it is at this point...when God asks Adam in affect why he has chosen to disobey; Adam loses it, "*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate.*" Sin takes complete control here and he blame-shifts to the woman and to God Himself. How often, do we need to seek forgiveness for this sin even in our redeemed state?**
 - d. **4thly, He questions Eve, "What is it that you have done?" Interestingly enough both of them fess up after they blame someone else... "*and I ate.*" "Yes, we did it...we broke the**

law and ate of the forbidden fruit. We disobeyed.” They declare their sin openly before God. This is the difference between believers and non-believers. As believers the Spirit leads us eventually to confess our sin...to seek repentance for our disobedience because we want to be in communion with God again.

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
October 13, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How does sin affect our prayer life even today after Christ has come and redeemed us?
2. What voices vie for our attention today?
3. Why is it so important not to listen to them?
 - a. **God commands that we only listen to His voice.**
 - b. **His is the ONLY voice that loves us unconditionally and is always looking out for us for His glory.**
 - c. **Every other voice that does not support God’s word and His will is an enemy to God and His glory.**
4. A few of side notes on Gen. 3:8-13 that will prepare us for Gen. 4.
 - a. Everything changed the moment that our first parents sinned...the relationship between God and man, between one another and the relationship between man and the rest of God’s creation were marked in a way that man could never rectify. That is the point of this breach...nothing we will ever be able to do can “fix” this break because of sin and the

curses that God inflicts. Rom. 8:19-24 verifies this as well... *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?”* (Romans 8:19-24, ESV)

- b. Adam’s eating of the little piece of fruit probably seemed small at the time, but it swung the door open to the greatest sin...that of taking the life of another premeditatedly.
 - c. The Bible does not mention Adam and Eve asking for forgiveness, just God granting it just like He had everything else for them. He knew what they needs and He would take care of that for His own, for He alone could grant to them salvation...they would not and could not even ask for it.
 - d. They continued afterwards to obey God as seen in their leaving the garden without a fuss and beginning a family just as God had commanded them to be fruitful and multiply.
 - e. We see in Abel’s sacrifice that Adam and Eve had passed on to their children the knowledge of God and the expectation for obedience to His Word and Will.
 - f. And we see in the brothers the beginning of the prophecy of Gen. 3:15...we see the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. Those who will represent God’s people and those who will not.
 - g. Cain’s action shows forth the actions of all non-believers against those who actively walk in God’s ways...a desire for our harm. Interesting the first death declared is that of a saint of God.
- C. 2nd prayer in the Bible? Gen. 4:1-15a
1. Introduction of this section: Interesting meaning of the boys names...Cain, the eldest, means *“possession or gotten.”* Abel, the 2nd son, means *“vanity, vapor or perishable.”* There are all kinds of theological argument given for the reason for these names...but I find them particularly interesting in what they represent about man...fallen and redeemed...we bear many of the same qualities as sinners even if we are God’s own... All men are vain and do vain things. All men are more possessive than they should be with God’s things. Traits that have been with us since the beginning.
 2. What were some things about Cain’s character that become immediately clear? (The actual prayer begins in vs. 5 or 6)
 - a. **Does not immediately respond to God until verse 13...no fear of the LORD.**
 - b. **Cain wanted to “posses” his own way...his own stuff...**
 - c. **No regard for life made in God’s image because he had no regard for God.**
 - d. **He envies his brother rather than loving him. Envy is always a sin.**
 - e. **He is characterized by jealousy and anger.**

- f. Cain did not come before God in faith, but from duty which always equals hypocrisy. He was at enmity with God...displaying his very nature. He is much like the man who gets held accountable for doing not quite enough...he will say he has done his best and it is not right for us to judge...when there is only one acceptable way to proceed and they chose not to go that way. (Prov. 19:3) He wishes to do things his own way.**
 - g. He has respect of honor for doing things God's way. Worship as God described at the time was not something he cared to do. He was consumed with himself...with the possessions he had.**
 - h. He has no respect for his father, for it is certain that Adam had told him about the proper forms of worship that God demanded...However, Adam being a fallen man even though restored by God accepted what he knew to be unacceptable...reverting back to his passivity that had gotten him into trouble before. But God would not receive it...being our heavenly Father he accepts nothing short of what He has commanded. Prov. 15:8; Is. 1:13**
 - i. When confronted by God, with the opportunity for forgiveness and the opportunity for deliverance, he refuses.**
 - j. He like all unbelievers have no real respect for the Word of God as the Word of the One True God.**
 - k. He hated the way of the LORD for he was evil...I John 3:12-13; Jude 1:11.**
3. Just like before, God asks questions of Cain? What is His purpose for doing so when He knows the answers?
4. Now let's look specifically at the prayer. What are some unique characteristics of this prayer when compared with the last one we looked at spoken by Cain's parents?
- a. Ho openly and without care lies to the God of the Universe. Vs. 9**
 - b. While Adam was irreverent, he also admitted that he had done wrong. Cain's enmity against God is obvious in his blaming of God with injustice...choosing Able over him...without confession. He questions God... "Am I my brother's keeper?"...rather than humbling himself before His God as his father had done.**
 - c. The ground was cursed in God's response to Adam but here the curse falls directly upon Cain...for God had mercy instore for his father but not for Cain.**
 - d. Cain's is most assuredly a complaint against God's actions...it crosses the line in accusing God of wrong doing.**
 - e. Adam knew he had done wrong...even when he was irreverent to God in blame-shifting but in the end he confesses what he did...Cain never confesses anything.**

- Said another way, Adam was compelled to tell the truth...eventually...Cain suffered from no need.**
- f. His prayer is full of accusations against God. he is openly defiant.**
 - g. He feels put out and says so...Adam is silent before his God as God curses him and Eve.**
 - h. He adds to what God has said to make things even worse and less just to any who might hear.**
5. What is God's response to Cain's complaint/prayer? Why?
 - a. He reaches out to Cain seeking for him to repent...offer of forgiveness is on the table. He knows he won't take it but the genuine offer is made. God shows Cain grace and mercy.**
 - b. Not that Cain could be saved...but showing him common grace as God does to all men... *"the rain falls on the just and the unjust..."***
 - c. Clarification of Cain's sentence.**
 - d. Only God can take Cain's life...and God will. In the meantime even a condemned criminal is afforded protection until the day of his sentence is to be carried out. *"Vengeance is mine says the Lord."***
 - e. God's ways are not our ways...His reasons for doing things are not always apparent to us even in the protecting and prolonging the lives of non-believers and evil doers. Common grace to all.**
 - f. In this case it seems God did not want people to forget what Cain had done.**
 6. What do we learn about prayer from this incident and this prayer?
 - a. We learn there are wrong kinds of prayers.**
 - b. We are not to tell God what to do.**
 - c. God comes first in a growing relationship.**
 - d. Humility is integral.**
 - e. We need to be quick to confession ,**
 - f. This shows us the importance of confession and the consequences without it.**
 - g. Results of not praying as we have been taught...with all the above and more in place.**
 7. Why does God obviously listen to Cain, when the Bible says in other places that God does not give heed to the prayers of the unbeliever? (See Prov. 1:24-25, 28; Prov. 28:9; Is. 1:15, 59:2-3, 66:18; John 9:31 for texts with answers.)
 - a. God does "hear" even the unbeliever but His response is always unto judgment not hearing as He would His children as unto salvation, growth and maturity in Him. God does in fact, talk to non-believers elsewhere in the Scripture.**
 - b. This was at the beginning and He was making an example of Cain...and,**

- c. He was leaving a record as to what an unbeliever looks like for all to see...and,**
- d. Beginning a record of the 2 classes of peoples in the earth...God's and not God's...and,**
- e. Show the consequences early setting a foundation aof what will happen to unbelievers in the future.**

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
October 20, 2013

- A. Prayer**
- B. Review**
 - 1. What were some unique characteristics of this prayer as compared with Adam and Eve's prayers in chapter 3?**

2. What did we learn about prayer from this unbeliever's prayer?
- C. Prayers of a man of Faith...Abraham...Gen. 15 and 18.
1. Background information is Gen. 12:1-9. What things does God promise Abram here?
 - a. **That God will lead and go with Abram wherever it is He is sending Him.**
 - b. **God will make this man a great nation, even though as yet Abram has no physical heir. Promises him offspring.**
 - c. **God will bless him and His family and make his name great...notice his name is made great only after God has blessed him after he is a great nation...**
 - d. **God blesses him that Abram will be a blessing to the nations.**
 - e. **God will bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse Abram. God will protect all Abrams family.**
 - f. **By the presence of his family all the nations of the world will be blessed...things won't be as bad as they could be.**
 2. What things do we see here about prayer that we saw in Gen. 3?
 - a. **God initiates the encounter. Gen. 3:9 says, "But the LORD God called to the man..." And here in our text, God called to Abram, "Now the LORD said to Abram..."...Abram would never had called to Him. True prayer is never a man's plan which he brings to God for Hm to bless. God is always the One who proposes. In other words, it appears from the prayers we have seen and will see that unless we base our prayers on a promise, a warning, and a conviction of God's will or on a direct action from God we may not have the right to pray.**
 - (1) **Some people are convinced that real prayer is crawling out on a limb and then begging God to keep someone from sawing off the limb...or finding something we want to do and then asking God to bless it...this is presumption.**
 - (2) **The difference is this...real prayer is acting on a previous knowledge of what God wants. It is always founded on the Word of God and His revealed will.**
 - b. **Two way prayer enters in only after God has enlisted man to carry out His plan. Every believer today has been given, by grace, a favored position before God and as such God reveals to us what we need to know and the conversation is to begin based on what God has revealed to us. God plants the desire to pray based on His revealed Word and will and we respond to that desire placed in us.**
 3. Now let's look to Gen. 15. We see a back a forth prayer between God and Abram. Once again God initiates the prayer time with Abram. Vision, dream, prayers are all ways that God uses to communicate with His children... specifically at this time as revelation was not written down yet.
 - a. What is the first thing God does in this vision/prayer? **Bases this vision/prayer upon a promise... "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield, your reward shall be very great." Side note: the**

word shield and the word in chapter 14:20 that is translated delivered are the same word.

- b. What is Abrams response to God's promise? **He almost seems to be confused as to what God is promising...in the context after Abram has been blessed by Melchizedek God affirms the blessing and promise of Abrams victory over the King of Sodom....but he wants some else a different kind of blessing.**
- c. Is this a prayer of presumption? Why or why not? **It is not, because Abrams prayer request is based upon God's revealed will and promise...God had said that Abram would be a mighty nation...Sarai was barren...but God had promised and in Abram's mind this meant God would have to start providing offspring's sometime soon based on God's promise for such. All other successes and prosperity would pale in comparison until God provided Abram with a son. So even here Abrams prayer is based on what God had already revealed to him in His promise in gen. 12:1-3.**
- d. How does God respond that tells us that this is not a prayer of presumption?
- (1) God responds by restating His promise to Abram...that his offspring...not an adopted heir like Eliezer...but his physical children will be as numerous as the stars. Confirming this be saying... "So shall your offspring be." A decree by God confirmed by God to Abram and Abrams response...silence, reverence, belief and God counted this response to him as righteousness...he called and justified Abram and now was confirming that work of God as seen in Abrams response to God's decree.**
- (2) Physically lays forth the covenant of redemption before Abram...a covenant cut in blood to declare that no one and nothing ...not even God Himself can go back on His Word. With this assurance all future prayers...talks with God are based here as Abram has this burned into his mind's eye as the foundation for his belief.**
- e. How do these things substantiate the presupposition we have already made concerning real prayer? **We don't hear from God this way anymore, as a rule...because we have His Word to guide and direct our prayers. He speaks in His Word and based on what God says to us in His Word we speak and we are to act and it is to affect how we pray. So we must know His Word to know what to pray for and how to pray.**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Prayers of the Bible are basically conversations with God...between God and man.
2. In Gen. 15 we see a back a forth prayer between God and Abram. What are some similar things between this prayer and the prayer of Adam and Eve?
 - a. **Once again God initiates the prayer time with Abram. Vision, dream, prayers are all ways that God uses to communicate with His children... specifically at this time as revelation was not written down yet.**
 - b. **This discussion was based in God's promises...**
 - (1) **God began reiterating the promise of victory to Abram over the King of Sodom...**
 - (2) **and then the confirmation of the promise of offspring...**
 - (3) **and then God's solemn promise in a covenant cut in blood to be Abram's God and him His people.**
 - c. **Silence before God...not as pronounced as here with Abram but still there...there are times to just be silent before God and listen...**
 - d. **Every time we go to Scriptures we are hearing God speak to us.**
3. What are some things we didn't see? Why not?
 - a. **Open confession...**
 - b. **No irreverence...**

- C. Now let's look at Gen. 18. In this case it is not a vision but rather a "face to face"...a theophany...one of the 3 was Christ incarnate...vs. 1- *"And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre..."* and again in vs. 3- *"Oh Lord..."* is a phrase that always refers to God. After the re-confirmation of God's covenant promises with Abraham and Sarah who seemingly needs to hear this promise for herself...for she was a bit skeptical...then the 4 of them went to a spot and looked down upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord asks Himself an interesting question, *"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he had promised him."* Basically God says there are 2 reasons that I will reveal my will to him after He asked that question of Himself. (1) because he has been chosen...that is been placed in a favored position as one of His own. He must know my ways, says the LORD so that his family will be blessed and know how to do righteously and justly as they walk in the way of the LORD.(2) He must know my ways so that he and his family might be a blessing to the nations. Knowing Gods will is still crucial so we know what to pray about....But then as they are looking upon these most wicked of cities...2 of the "angels" go on down to Sodom and Abraham is left with the LORD on the hill...

1. Read the "prayer"...the conversation with the LORD verses 23-33. What do we find interesting in this exchange that we haven't seen before?

- a. **First, we must see that it was God who brought Abraham into this conversation...**
- b. What characteristics or qualities do we see here?
 - (1) **Compassion**
 - (2) **Fear of the LORD**
 - (3) **Persistence in prayer...seeking to preserve God's righteous character.**
- c. Next Abraham begins negotiating with God in prayer...What is the acceptable practice called? Is this just semantics? **Intercession...but perhaps a more urgent type...the type that we should all have from time to time.**
- d. **Abraham praises God with His attributes of mercy in this case...Abraham knows God is merciful so he appeals to God's attributes... "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" The more we have intimate fellowship with God through His Word and prayer the more we know God's qualities and His attributes. To honor God first in our prayers will be seen in another model prayer... "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name..."**
- e. **Abraham is persistent in prayer...he kept pressing God is you will. Asking God to spare the city if there be 50 righteous, 45, 40, 30, 20 , and finally 10...and the Lord promises not to destroy if there is 10...but of course, there is not 10...Persistent prayer should show the heart of the prayer...how much do we want God's will to be done...for God's glory to be demonstrated...not what we want for our sake...but what we want for God's glory.**
- f. **God wanted Abraham to negotiate/ intercede for the city...this is part of the mission God had given him to be a blessing. God revealed what He was going to do to get Abraham to intercede on behalf of the city...and we should follow this example in our prayers...knowing God's character and His attributes we pray God's will...not some general, generic "let your will be done..." but praying specifically God's revealed will.**
- g. **I am convinced that we often struggle in prayer thinking we are battling against God expecting Him to change His mind and give us what we want. Sometime that is the case...and we should always check that ...but often we are just not convinced that we can intercede so persistently. God is the one who places the burden of prayer on our lives...so He prompts the prayers and then He may answers the prayer as it reflects His will. Remember Abraham was a "friend of God" and he felt free to ask Him whatever was within God's nature and revealed will...**
- h. **The cities are still destroyed...the loved one that is prayed for for 30 or 40 years still is not bowed a knee to the LORD...the cancer wasn't taken away and my spouse died...sooo...what good is this type of prayer? There is an account, found in II Peter, which suggests that only righteous person in the city was Lot himself. In II Peter we read: "... if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to**

ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority...” (2 Pet 2:6-10a ESV)

(1) That is a divinely-inspired commentary on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It has great relevance to our own situation today.

(2) The great lesson that comes home to my heart, and I hope to yours, from this story is that true prayer is always grounded on the character of God, not the needs, the wants, and the desires of men. It begins with who God is, and what He wants.

2. Did God answer Abrahams concern/question *“Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”*... in prayer? **Yes.** How?
3. What parts of prayer that we have considered up to this point...**AREN'T** ...part of this prayer? Why? **Confession...Abraham is in constant communion with God at this point.**
4. What seems to be at the heart of this prayer?
 - a. **Intervention for the sake of preserving God’s character...Who is God? He is just...He is merciful...He is gracious. This prayer maintains that image of God...something God had in mind as He brought Abraham into this issue and prayer.**
 - b. **The more rightly you walk with God the more boldly you will approach him in prayer.**
 - c. **Prayer without ceasing...persistent prayer is in mind as we approach God with His will why wouldn’t we want to keep p[raying for and about those things He has promised us.**
5. How has the knowledge gained so far changed the way you think of prayer?

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
Nov. 3, 2013

D. Prayer

E. Review

1. What was the heart of the prayer in Chapter 18 between Abraham and God?
Abraham seeking to preserve the character of God...His justice...His mercifulness...His graciousness.

2. What type of prayer did he use to achieve this purpose? **Prayer of intercession.**

3. But even in this “new” prayer we saw elements of all prayers of believers. What were some of them again?

a. God initiates the prayer time...How does God do this today?

Through His Word as we read it and hear Him through it.

b. The discussion is based on God’s promises and or His revealed will..

F. Gen. 32:9-32...this section encompasses a couple of prayers of Jacob...vs. 9-12 and vs. 22-33.

1. This incident, found in the 32nd chapter of Genesis, comes at a time when Jacob is coming back into the land of Canaan, having spent some twenty years with his Uncle Laban, in Syria. Jacob is now married to two wives and is the father of eleven children. He has amassed great herds of cattle and camels and other material wealth, and God had said to him that the time had now come for him to come back into Canaan. But Jacob is fearful because he knows that he is going to meet up with his twin brother Esau, and he is afraid of that encounter. He remembers vividly the last time he saw Esau, when he had cheated him out of his birthright by a clever manipulation. When he saw what had happened Esau was very angry, and Jacob had to flee from his brother's wrath. Now, Jacob is on his way back to Canaan and he has to face his brother again. In a typical action, Jacob sent a couple of messengers ahead to let his brother know he was coming. He wanted to feel out the scene, and see what Esau's reaction would be. The messengers return with the foreboding words: *"Your brother is coming to meet you with 400 armed horsemen,"* (cf. Gen 32:6). Nothing in the account suggests, or says, that Esau intended to harm him, but Jacob immediately jumps to the conclusion that Esau would not come with 400 armed men if he was not intent on some evil. But actually, it was not uncommon for this to occur. The head of a family usually did not meet alone with people especially someone who had been an adversary. Jacob is very frightened indeed. As we know, God had sent Jacob back into the land, and, furthermore, when he came to the borders of the land,

God had encouraged him with a remarkable vision, or an opening of his eyes. There is a brief reference to it at the beginning of this chapter. Though we are not given details, it is apparent that Jacob experienced something very much like what happened to the servant of Elisha in that famous scene where the servant is concerned about the armies of the Syrians around him. On that occasion Elisha prayed that his eyes would be opened, and he suddenly saw all the angelic hosts of the Lord. Something like that happened to Jacob. God showed him the tremendous spiritual forces that were at work to guard him and protect him as he came back to face this encounter with his brother. Jacob named the place, "The Two Companies," by which he meant the band of people who were traveling with him and the invisible company of angels who also accompanied him. You would have thought, from that, that Jacob would have felt very secure and at peace when he came to meet his brother, but, instead, he is fearful and trembling, certain that he is going to meet with danger, if not destruction. So he prays, and his prayers are found here in these words in Genesis 32. The second prayer is really a most excellent prayer, a remarkable prayer, a kind of model prayer of the Old Testament.

2. Let's begin by looking at vs. 9-12...Jacob's 1st prayer after the vision of God's divine protection. What things do we see in this prayer that we have seen in other prayers of believers?
 - a. **God has engineered Jacobs need to pray by presenting him with the coming of Esau...**
 - b. **Jacob prays to the covenantal God...the God of his father Abraham and his father Isaac ...prays in God's character. This is the way we are supposed to pray by focusing on God...Praising Him. Just like Jesus said, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name..."**
 - c. **Prays with the knowledge of God's word and promises/will...praying God's word back to Him shows that we do know what He says to us plus we are praying as we should in the Word.**
 - d. **Confession...he fully acknowledges his own unworthiness of God's steadfast love and faithfulness...and of course, as we have said many times this seems to be the hardest part of prayer for most of us. He realizes he does not deserve, has not earned and is not entitled to God's grace.**
 - e. **Thanksgiving as he acknowledges God's faithfulness and steadfast love and how God has blessed him materially and spiritually... "two camps" can refer to the fact that he split his camp up but more than likely he is talking about vs.1...his camp and a camp of God's protective angels.**
 - f. **Very specific and definite petition to God for deliverance from his brother's supposed wrath...and in this petition Jacob is extremely humble again as he gives the reason for his petition...his fear of his brother. Even though this is only an assumption...but the fact it that this prayer is based on a wrong assumption so it is faulty. He is, nonetheless, being honest in his anxiety...none of us should hold back our anxiety or our doubt...these things drive us to the Lord and**

He knows them without us saying them any way so to not say them make us dishonest in prayer.

- g. Then he wraps it up with recognition of God's covenantal promise that you would think would quell his fears. For He remembers what God had promised...right? Well, he remembers the promise but the next few verses show that he didn't take what he said to heart.**
3. Read verses 13-21. What does Jacob do in light of the prayer that he just made to God? **As was somewhat normal to his character he set out to take care of appeasing his own brother...by deceit...bribery... but in many ways, just like his forefathers, he thought he had to take the bull by the horns and do something himself. There is nothing in his actions that indicate that he thought God was going to do anything in answer to his prayer.**
4. How many of us do this...pray to God and then set out to take care of it ourselves figuring that He will be there when we need Him or rather forget that we even ask Him for His help? Why do we do this? **"Unbelievers don't pray because they are afraid that God might be there. Believers don't pray because they are afraid that He might not be there."**- Steve Brown
5. Verses 22-24a seems to indicate that Jacob is somehow troubled with all his scheming and so sends his family across the river and he stays to contemplate all that he has done or to prepare himself for what he perceives to be the inevitable...his death. But instead of finding rest the rest of vs. 24 tells us, *"And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day"*. Sound familiar? When we have spent our days and nights scheming to get the best of someone or something...or... when we are so stressed over an issue or an event that we are anticipating with great anxiety, we are often so worn out we can't sleep or we sleep so fitfully that it feels like we have wrestled with someone all night waking up even more worn out. This was Jacob's come to Jesus moment...we might say today...Or really.... **Jesus' come to Jacob moment!** And this is the real point for all of us...Jesus comes to us...not us to Him! For it says very specifically that the man...who is God incarnate wrestled with Jacob...not that Jacob wrestled with God. Jesus came to Him and wrestled with Jacob ...the phrase almost makes it clear that Jacob was at first passive to the idea...but then, obviously Jacob does fight back. And after hours of wrestling, Jacob not willing to give in...it wasn't in his nature... the incarnate God touches his hip and it goes out. All wrestling is over now...Jacob has lost the battle but now he finally desires the blessing and so he clings to the man for dear life. Here the prayer begins.
6. Read the prayer in verses 26-29. Compare this prayer/conversation with the one in Eden. How are they alike and unlike?
- a. God came to them...God comes to Jacob.**
- b. He is caught in his sin...Jacob is wrestling with God after all and had been for some time with all the scheming he had been doing even after praying to God. He is caught and knows who he is with and he clings to God seeking a**

blessing...Adam hides from God and doesn't seek anything from Him.

- c. Jacob is wounded by God and he will have it with him the rest of his life as reminder of his struggle with God...Adam was cursed by God and he will have the curse with him the rest of his life and ours as his sin is imputed to all mankind.**
- d. The blessings of a name change and new clothes represent renewal that will be with them the rest of their lives.**
- e. God asks obvious questions.**
 - (1) "What is your name?" He knew his name but Jacob needed to remember Jacob meant "deceiver, the man who seeks to take the place of someone else." He is reminded that his character is to trust only himself...to get the best of someone else.**
 - (2) Then God asks, "Why is it you ask me my name?" Jacob did not need to be told God's name...it is possible that he was reverting back to his old habits here seeking to gain the upper hand by God telling him His name...or, standing on ceremony he was just returning the question and God says with this question, "Why are you wasting tem with such questions? Have learned your lesson?" Because Jacob did in fact know God's name as we see from his declaration in verse 30.**
- f. By Jacob repeating his name he is acknowledging and truly confessing his nature before his God. Just like when God questioned Adam and he confessed what he had done.**
 - (1) These names come to be used somewhat interchangeably for Jacob/Israel.**
 - (2) When Jacob is used it is usually when he doubts or falls back into the "old man sinful tendencies..."**
 - (3) When we see Israel it speaks to his faithfulness the "new man". Gen. 49:33 shows us the physical death of the man Jacob and Gen. 50:2 that the Egyptian embalmed Israel a man of righteousness and power the man of God.**
- g. God truly blesses Jacob by changing His name to Israel...God's fighter, God's striver....blesses Adam by the sacrifice of the animals for substitution, the new clothes and by restoring Adam to authority in naming Eve.**

- 7. How is this prayer different from Jacob's first one?
- 8. What else do we learn about persistence in prayer from this prayer?
- 9. Let's look at little more at this concept of persistent prayer from Luke 11:5-11 and Luke 18:1-8. What are some things we learn about being persistent in prayer from these texts?
 - a. We are to always prayer and never give up. ..not because he needs it or because it is a test of our sincerity...but because it honors God.**
 - b. Praying persistently what he wants us to pray for is crucial for us as a habit. It is honoring to God when we wrestle**

with Him ..because when we wrestle with Him we come to know Him better.

- c. Luke 11:5-11 teaches us specifically that God is not going to answer our prayers because he is our friend but because we are persistent...what God reveals is so important to us that we don't stop praying. George Mueller said, "*The great fault of the children of God is that they do not continue in prayer; they do not go on praying; they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it.*"**
- d. In Luke 18 the widow persists with this judge because she knows she can get justice from him...and so should we persist with the One who has revealed Himself in His actions and attributes.**
- e. We sometimes think God is unfair...we don't really consider the half of it...Someone once said, "*God is more sovereign than our worst nightmare!*"... Unfair...always fair...but with a different standard that is why we are to go to Him.**
- f. We must never hesitate to pray the same things...this is not "vain repetitions" which usually are things that we want not things that God has revealed that we should want...like singleness of heart...singleness of devotion...singleness of action for God's glory.**
- g. Interesting closing of this parable: "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?*" Will His people reveal themselves by persistently praying what He has revealed? Will God's people be found continuing in prayer...persistently praying for what God wants?**
- h. We can't know the power of prayer if we are worrying about how often is too often.**

10. What can we take away from this encounter for our prayer life?

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
Nov. 10, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What did Jacob's 2 prayers in Genesis 32 add to our understanding of what God requires in prayer? **1st one...not so much given his actions after he made such a prayer. An eloquent prayer but his heart is revealed in his actions...how often do we put up a prayer such as this and then go and do our own thing....thankfully God is patient with him.**
2. Which of the 2 prayers were more sincere?...why? **2nd prayer was more humble and persistent...showing his actions and attitude now are one and the same...what will it take to get the blessing? Stop fighting...give up...let go!**
3. How important does the Scriptures seem to make persistence in prayer? Why? **As with all things biblical...absolutely important so they we are constantly aware of where we need to go and with what attitude.**

C. Exodus 33:11-23- a prayer of Moses- How Big should our prayers be.

1. The main thrust in the first 11 verses of this chapter is what the LORD says in vs. 3, *"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way for you are a stiff-necked people."* God is assuring Moses and His people that He will refrain from immediately destroying them for the evil they have already done and the evil that they will do, that He will fulfill His promise to take them into the Promised land to clear out the Canaanites, to settle them in the land, to give them the land He had

promised, but, He will not go up in their midst. That means not only that He will not go up in their midst in the tabernacle which He has already revealed to Moses, but also that there will be no visible manifestation of or experience of His presence with the people of God. In the passage before us Moses responds to this revelation that God will only send a representative...an angel...with them. God promises to fulfill everything He had promised but He tells Moses that He won't be with them when it is done. Now think through that a minute. It didn't take Moses long to see the problem with this. Moses contemplates the people of God experiencing God's blessing without His presence and he comes to the realization that the blessing of the Promised Land, without God's presence is a curse.

2. Moses is not happy with God's revealed plan. So what does He do? **He prays urgently to God.** What elements of prayer do we see in this prayer in verses 12-13?
 - a. **He begins by speaking of God's promise to Him...to lead these people and to take them to the Promised Land...his prayer is based upon God's word...12 a.**
 - b. **Interesting point of INFORMATION: Moses doesn't ask Not to be consumed by God! Better to be consumed than NOT be in God's presence.**
 - c. **12b. he makes it clear that he is in over his head without help...specific help...the angel is not enough...only God's presence would do. Confesses his weakness.**
 - d. **The statement, "*I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight...*" shows that Moses knows whom he belongs to. This is covenantal language that speaks of Moses' election into God's family. God's grace showered upon him as he looked forward to the finished work of Jesus. And based on that he also knows that he has the right to complain to God about God's revealed plan at this point.**
 - e. **In vs. 13 he admits his ignorance concerning God...how many of us today would ever think about doing that? Here is Moses, God's servant...God's friend...he has seen firsthand many acts of God and God's character in His commands. Moses was also the first person to receive God's law to write it all down. So Moses has an intimate knowledge of God ...Yet, he prays, "*please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to (continue to) find favor in your sight.*" If Moses, of all people, thinks he hasn't arrived, then there is a good chance we haven't either!**
 - f. **Humility is absolutely crucial as we approach God for the urgent and the not so urgent. Moses wasn't called the most humble of men for nothing...Numbers 12:3**
 - g. **Moses intercedes for Israel... "*Consider too that this nation is your people.*" Within his intercession He speaks of God attributes and His elective choices. If God doesn't go with them there will be no substance to any blessings that may be received...in fact, without God's presence Moses knows there will be nothing. Not that God needed to be reminded but that it needed to be said.**

3. What is God's response in verse 14? Why, because Moses is such a masterful negotiator? **Moses, as the leader, was supposed to pray for these people to God...his job was to intercede on their behalf...How many times do we not pray for those things we are supposed to pray for...like our children, spouses, our church, the leadership in the church, work and mission... just taking these for granted...Moses takes this role seriously and prays as he is supposed to do...and God delights in showering His people with His grace...does just that show His grace. God speaks to Moses' fear.**
- a. Then what did Moses do in verses 15-16?
- (1) **It was as if Moses hadn't heard God or he heard Him but had such a complete argument that He had to get all the way through it before he could really hear God.**
 - (2) **It was too easy...but that is the point...when we do as we are supposed to do we will see God work...if we don't do what God expects than is it any wonder we seem so alone sometimes as if God is not listening?**
 - (3) **How many times have we argued with God in prayer...really arguing with ourselves seeking to justify our wants, needs or actions, even if they were "good." Without God's presence even the things that the world defines as "good" will be a curse. They were all "good" arguments but they were unnecessary.**
 - (4) **He was making a fuller case...that he would rather be consumed than not be in God's presence...more of a pleading...so God knows his concern.**
- b. And what does God do in verse 17? **Confirms His grace by saying, "Are you done, yet...I will go with you and my people. You have been obedient and as I have said when my people are obedient then they/ you will receive my blessings...My presence in which is my rest." So God promises His presence with the people. But as God's chosen leader and mediator He wants more.**
4. What does Moses now request in the next part of his prayer to the Father? Why did He pray such a bold prayer? **He has already prayed for more knowledge of God's attributes and His character since in his confession he knows there is so much more to know...and if he is going to continue to lead these people he need more...It seems he is actually wanting to see God's physical presence...at least like God had done once before at the burning bush. How BIG and BOLD is such a prayer? He is making it clear that God's presence is of up most importance to him...he is willing to risk being consumed than not be in God's presence...This is Moses's main concern in this prayer. How would it be if we all had such an urgency in our prayers? We nonchalantly approach God not even thinking about how important it is to seek God's presence. We don't think about how our sin affects our closeness with God at the moment. We are not convinced that a**

short list of sins makes a difference. We DO NOT earnestly seek more and more of Him ...it is not what drives our faith...or our prayers! And it should...Moses wants to be absolutely certain of God's presence all the time...willing to be consumed rather than be without it!

5. How does the Father respond to Moses request which shows us that Moses hasn't asked wrongly?
 - a. **He quickly is willing to do some things but not everything...**
 - b. **God says, "I will show you my goodness"...God will reveal that His nature is good. We all need to know this from time to time. Especially in this hard, cruel and messy world...where not everyone is fixed and whole...not everything goes as we would want...in fact it seems wherever we turn we run into evil...God says, "I AM GOOD."**
 - c. **God says, "Not only am I good.... But I will proclaim before you my name, The LORD."...God is graciously saying that He will be revealing all that Moses can handle about His character...His nature which He delights in revealing to His people.**
 - d. **Next God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." God is saying here that He is gracious and merciful and never arbitrary. He will be gracious to this stiff-necked people and go with them into the Promised Land. We can never complain about the justice He administers and we can never claim that His mercy towards us is based on anything we have done...it is His decision alone. His justice is always deserved, His mercy is never deserved.**
 - e. **After telling Moses all that He is willing to do, He now tells Him something He is not willing to do... "But, you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." But even doing this God is revealing something else about His nature...His incomprehensibility and that He is too holy for us to be in His physical presence.**

6. What does this tells us about our prayers today?
 - a. **That above all things a desire to see God's glory ought to drive our prayers and our actions in this life...this should be a primary characteristic of our prayers...at least as far as motivation is concerned. Why do we pray? To connect to our God and to see and experience His glory in our lives...this should drive us each time we come before Him...with each breath.**
 - b. **That to have a correct understanding of who God is important.**
 - c. **Our Theology is crucial for our prayer life. Theology is in fact, life.**
 - d. **Experience doesn't cut it...we must pray on the solid Word of God and what God reveals about Himself.**

- e. That the God of Exodus 33:19 is not known in popular American church life today...and with this being true our prayers are extremely shallow...we do not receive because we ask wrongly...as James tells us.**
7. Who does God tell Moses He is?
- a. God is good.**
 - b. God is gracious.**
 - c. God is merciful.**
 - d. God is unaffected by His surroundings...He does what He does without anything outside Himself determining His choices. Nothing anything in all creation...not even ourselves can influence God differently than He is already persuaded Himself to do.**
 - e. Moses asks to see God's glory...God tells him who he is... all His attributes manifest His glory.**
8. How does all of this answer the question, "Why is God gracious to me?"
9. How should the correct answer to this question shape and impact our prayer life?

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
Nov. 24, 2013

- A. Prayer
- B. Review
- 1. What was Hannah and Mary's main reason for their respective prayers? To exalt the goodness of God.**
 - 2. Why are these prayers so revered throughout Church history? They both bring hope in the present.**

3. What do you see in these prayers that are “missing” from your own?

“passion” a desire to see things the way they did...a lack of conviction toward prayer, knowing that it is necessary but doing it more out of duty than out of passion...like Moses who was willing to be consumed if he couldn’t see God’s glory.
 4. If God is such a chauvinist as many throughout the church seek to demonstrate why would these prayers even be included in the Bible? Is it just to demonstrate their weakness and subordinate station in life?
- C. I Chronicles 4:9-10. Today we will be looking at a lesser known believer...Jabez. This prayer can illustrate the very practical impact that prayer can have on a difficult and troubled life. So far we have looked at some of the “celebrities” of Scripture...but today we look at one who is “lost” in the minutia of another genealogy. (This is one of those sections of Scripture that we often jump over when we are reading through the Bible.) Here in the midst of all these names there is a sudden focus on one individual. Look at I Chron. 4:9-10. After these words the list of names begins again. It is almost as if someone was scanning a group of people all in a row, moving from face to face, until suddenly he stops and focuses on one individual...calling attention to this one man. So let’s seek to understand the man for a moment before we look at the specific prayer.
1. Why would God place something like this in the midst of a laundry list or a genealogy like this?
 - a. **God wants us to read His Word; word for word...**
 - b. **Students of the OT will remember that God often tucks gems in the midst of other accounts...or that they just suddenly appear.**
 - c. **By doing so He wishes to stop us for a moment and to consider...why, He put this here...and of what importance is it for us?**
 2. What is it about this one man that seems to be the focus of these 2 verses? In other words what does God want us to know about this man...the reason why we have stopped here a minute to gaze?
 - a. **He is honorable...more honorable than His brothers...which tells us more about his brothers than it does about him. When the God focuses on the honor of a man He is usually indicating the dishonor that is attached to those around Him. So, in other words...this man is pointed out because he is the exception in a rather dishonorable family. Maybe he is the only true believer/Christian in the bunch even though they are all from the tribe of Judah.**
 - b. **That his name means “pain” or “sorrow”...that he was born in sorrow or pain. There is probably more going on than just talking about the pain of childbirth for if that was the case Jabez might have been the most popular name in the land... So what is going on here?**
 - (1) **Just by virtue of it being raised in this context where Jabez is the only honorable male in the family we have to think mare is going on...she is discouraged about something...or she had been at the time of his birth.**

- (2) Then, there is something else that may give us a hint....and that is the omissions:**
- **All through the list we see heads of household ...so and so fathered so and so...but here it seems that Jabez is just dropped in here...**
 - **There is no mention of his father or paternity, no inheritance, no heritage mentioned.**
 - **These are God's Word first and foremost but they also could have been copied from other sources of record as well and if that is the case then what's missing may be a clue to his mother's pain.**
 - **It is not made exactly clear as to why he prays for the things he prays for ...or is it?**
 - **The father could have died penniless...he could have divorced his wife for non-binding reasons...he could have gambled away his property and wealth in some way that his name would no longer show up on the roles of the families...he has indentured his family thus having their names excluded from the official record...somehow he has brought upon the family some type of shame that he is not mentioned in the record...and Jabez' brothers seems to inherited a dishonorable spirit...this bad reputation all around has brought dishonor, disgrace upon the family and the mother gives birth in hopelessness and pain of not knowing where her next meal will come from.**
 - **He is a young man who has nothing...doesn't even have any practical reason to hope in anything...we would say today...that he has had the cards stacked against him by others...since his family name has been expunged from the official records he has no property, no way to even start earning a living, no way to attain position and honor in the community in which they reside.**
- c. He is numbered among the elect. All through the genealogies we are struck with the long list of non-believers and then a believer shows up and seeks to honor God in all His ways. There is no explanation as to how he comes to be a believer...no mention of his being influenced by another for the most part...just that he begins to honor God in all his ways unlike his fathers. God's election...His choice is the only possible sound answer to this. And obviously...he knows he is God's....because His pray reflects knowledge of God's Word.**
- d. With all of this difficulty in his life this story is not about his difficulties but about his triumph. Generally speaking he is pointed out because he is a man of prayer....and his life has been changed by the power of prayer. Oh, that we could ALL be pointed out and known as people of prayer.**

3. Now let's look at his prayer in verse 10. He seems to be asking for 4 things. What are they? **Blessing, enlarged borders, let your hand be with me, and keep me from evil so that it might not bring his pain.** So let's break these down and see how these can be and should be incorporated into our prayers at times.
- a. What do we mean when we pray "bless me", "bless my children", "bless my country"?
 - (1) **I think usually it is used when we can't think of something specific to pray...but that doesn't take away from the fact that is a biblical thing to pray if we mean it.**
 - (2) **Sometimes we pray it as a request for some kind of inner sense of a relationship with God. Blessing may mean to us a drawing near to God...and it does.**
 - (3) **Sometimes is in wanting something from God.**
 - (4) **He knew where the blessing could come from...God alone.**
 - (5) **He knew that there are things that couldn't be accomplished without the blessing.**
 - (6) **Seldom is it in recognition that we are blessed already...but are seeking an even greater sense of that blessedness.**
 - b. What does Jabez seem to mean when he prays this?
 - (1) **He prays like most believers in the Bible... from a sense of being blessed, but like Moses, prays earnestly for an even greater sense of that blessedness so we can bring God glory.**
 - (2) **Prays this also knowing that this does not necessarily mean that everything is going to get better...for if God means for his to continue in this poverty he knows that would be a blessing as well.**
 - (3) **But that doesn't stop him from asking boldly.**
 - c. What do you suppose he means by asking God to "enlarge his borders"? (Remember he doesn't seem to have any property at this time.) What does this communicate to you for today? **It pretty much meant the same thing then as it does now.**
 - (1) **Maybe ...that God might restore his families lost fortune/honor. To expand his "influence". They have no voice at the gate...they have no voice...so to be given a voice their influence would be enlarged.**
 - (2) **For sure...That he might get a piece of property so that his family could once again be counted among the peoples.**
 - (3) **Asking God to help him breakout of whatever situation is limiting him...or even enslaving us...**
 - **This is a prayer to open his eyes to God's possibilities not as some have said asking God to "open doors" for him. He is already blessed...God isn't keeping something hidden from him...he simply needs to rest in the Lord looking to Him for his guidance not trying to make things happen for himself...with no status he**

couldn't even if he wanted to. So he knows he is totally dependent upon God.

- **This might mean that he works at a laboring job until he has put enough money together to buy something else...or**
- **Simply to provide for his mother, since it doesn't seem that they are helping her pain at all...and**
- **Then maybe overtime pay for their family name back honorably... "being faithful in the small things..."...or**
- **Waiting the year of Jubilee to where his family could reclaim their status...**
- **Either way waiting on the Lord and doing what he finds for his hands to do which are all opportunities supplied by the LORD for him that help him enlarge his borders.**

d. What about ... *"let your hand be with me"*?

- (1) **We don't know the future but we all want to know the future and we wish that God would reveal the future to us.**
- (2) **Rather he knows what he needs in the midst of all of these questions...a guide...and he knows the only one who can guide him...God the Father...so he asks. Just like James says about the one who wishes for wisdom ask for it...Boldness if often in just asking...how many times do things go unasked because of fear on our part...if the Bible shows us anything is that those who are God's...who have been blessed ...need to feel free to ask. If we get it wrong...God will show us another way to ask...it's not like we have anything to lose really but we have so much more to gain... a closer relationship... whether God comes through from our perspective or not.**

e. What is he saying when he prays, *"...and that you would keep me from harm/evil so that it might not bring me pain!"* Actually it appears that the Hebrew should read here, *"That you would keep me from the harm, the evil that is within, so that it might not pain me."*

- (1) **To be as much different as his father as light is to day. Let me not be harming in any way.**
- (2) **So it is possible that there is a play on words going on here between the word hurt or pain and Jabez' name so that what he is actually praying maybe more along the line of, Lord, whatever it is that is in me that is wrong, I pray that you will keep it from "Jabez-ing" me...causing me pain... which has been his lot in life up to this point. He could simply be talking about the resident sin that is evident and noticeable...or he may be referring to some family issues that seem evident in his other brothers as well...mental illness...or a spirit of addiction. Whatever it is it is a weakness that seems to frighten him. Like:**

- **Anger issues...**
 - **Lying**
 - **Lustful thoughts and/or actions**
 - **Alcohol abuse....**
 - **Gambling addiction**
 - **Whatever it was that caused his family's name to be stricken from the record of families...**
- (3) Also, the Bible teaches us to hate sin, and to watch against it.**
- (4) So here is a young man recognizing his environment...how he grew up... recognizing his tainted hereditary...the shame and dishonor on the family name...and recognizes his own propensity to sin...and instead of blaming everything for his bad circumstances rather he stands in the midst of these as an example to all of us as to how we need to come before the Father to have mercy upon us.**
4. What then can we learn from this short prayer that can help guide us in our prayers in this life especially when things get rough?
- a. That we are to come before the LORD boldly because He expects us to act like His own.**
 - b. Because we have been blessed we can hold onto the greatness, the glory, the wisdom and the knowledge of God in prayer...and not need some dramatic or not so dramatic divine intervention to prove God is listening and that He is there.**
 - c. That answer to prayers are seen and experienced as we walk in God's will through the normal avenues of life when we have eyes to see them.**
5. Now how about those last words of vs. 10, *"And God granted what he asked for."*?
- (1) God did it! I love the simplicity of this statement. No fanfare...no angelic announcement... no voice from God...or even a warming peace within him as so many seem to look for as an answer to prayer. Just simply, "God granted what he asked for."**
- (2) What do you suppose this looked like practically?**
- **As he went on his way resting in God... God provided clear paths to follow...God provided paths that he hadn't seen before...maybe they had always been there but he was too distraught to see them...or maybe the time was just not right... either way something specifically happened so that "The Chronicler" could say God granted Jabez his prayer.**
 - **He worked out his salvation with fear and trembling and eventually by God's grace he was able to say that God did all these things for him.**

- **Maybe in the year of Jubilee he had his property returned and his name expunged. All things he would have had to pursue not sitting back and waiting but pursuing the things the Lord had made evident to him.**
- **Steady and with great integrity showing his faith before men...he walked in God's will until that day that he was able to look back and see that all his prayers were answered.**
- **I Chron. 2:55 may also sheds some light on the proof that God did in fact grant to Jabez what he asked for. In this text Jabez is the name of a town...which could be a reminder of what God did for him...winning back his inheritance perhaps the town becomes a highly respected place where the scribes study God's word. So it is possible that Jabez, the man of prayer...was also a man of the Word.**

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
Dec. 1, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

6. What do you see in these prayers that are “missing” from your own?
7. What did we learn from this short prayer that can help guide us in our prayers in this life especially when things get rough?
 - d. That we are to come before the LORD boldly because He expects us to act like His own.**
 - e. Because we have been blessed we can hold onto the greatness, the glory, the wisdom and the knowledge of God in prayer...and not need some dramatic or not so dramatic divine intervention to prove God is listening and that He is there.**
 - f. That answer to prayers are seen and experienced as we walk in God's will through the normal avenues of life when we have eyes to see them.**
8. Why do you suppose God “hid” such a gem away in the genealogies of His people?

C. Daniel 9:1-19

1. Daniel is almost always thought of as a book of prophecy about the end times specifically and, of course, prophecy is found there just like it is in most OT books. Everyone seems to want to know about the end times...as they wish to perceive it rather than the way God has laid it out. But to think of Daniel as

just a book about prophecy really misses the mark once again. For there is so many other things involved here that are extremely practical and useable in a pluralistic and immoral society. This book speaks clearly giving suggestion of how believers can live in such a culture. But now we are looking at one of those very practical sections that speaks specifically about certain things that should mark our prayers. As we read this section we see the prophet Daniel seeking to make heads or tails out of a prophecy and as such he shows us the way to deal with God's Word when we are unclear about it but more importantly what we should recognize about ourselves and how we should approach such a holy God. Daniel is around 90 years old at this time. He has served through many changes of dynasties during his time in Babylon, serving himself as a prime minister of the kingdom under 3 different kings. Now he is living under the rule of the Medes and Persians and the exile is about to come to an end.

2. The 1st 3 verses tell us that Daniel prayed this prayer in the 1st year of King Darius, the general who had captured the city of Babylon and was subsequently given control over the region by the emperor Cyrus the Great. Daniel had had a vision some 15 years prior that had literally unnerved him at the time that he did not understand. Interesting, now, after all the time he had had with the Scriptures ...the Pentateuch and the letters of the other prophets specifically Jeremiah he was "just" seeing this Scriptures concerning the timing of the exile to be over. Even a man of God like Daniel misses something when reading...it is only when God wants us to see a particular thing sometimes that the Scriptures are opened up in a different way. Certain events had to first occur for him to make sense of the Scriptures before Him. God's timing is always right. He knew now that the time was at hand, but there were still things he couldn't see clearly so he prays. The specific verses he seems to have in mind are Jeremiah 29:10-14.

3. What one the does the LORD God make clear to the people that they are to be about doing especially after the time of their exile is over? **They are to call out to Him...and then come and pray to Him...they are to seek Him with their whole heart.** What does this say to us today? **God announces in His Word what He will do, but he also indicates that one of the means He uses in bringing these things about is prayer...that is, as His people begin to pray...as we are obedient to His commands ...He will accomplish what He has announced He is going to do.** So does this mean that God can only accomplish His will because we pray? Why or why not? If He is going to do something why does He need for me to pray? **Because of God's covenant relationship we have responsibility as well as He expects we are to do as He commands us to do...and He uses that obedience to carry out His will. ...Our prayers are a "means" that He uses. So while they do not determine what God will do...God choses to use them as means to His end. One of the things we have learned throughout this series I hope is that God uses us to carry out His will...He doesn't need us...but He delights in using us in the process. This is so important to Him that He tells us in affect that He will delay...or at least it will appear as if He delays... doing what he says he will do until we respond in prayer. It is**

all part of the plan and timing is really never in question from His perspective but from ours.

4. While the words of this prophecy would have greatly encouraged Daniel, there was at least one thing that did not encourage Daniel...the people. Go figure! There was little or no sign that any of the Israelites in the region of Babylon were at all interested in returning to Israel. They were being treated with respect in this land now controlled by the Medes and the Persians. They had been brought to this land as slaves and sheep herders and through the years in Babylon they had become accepted and accomplished business people adding much to the economy of the Babylonians...in other words they became model citizens in this land that had previously sought to enslave them. So it seemed that most were not at all interested in returning to their former lifestyles...to the ruin of their holy city Jerusalem. For this reason Daniel finds himself fasting and in sack cloth, expressing mourning for his people and he prays the prayer before us.
5. Read verses 4-19. Now let's break down the parts of this prayer.
 - a. How would you describe what he is doing in verse 4, as it pertains to prayer? **Praise/ adoration. He is recognizing who God is and He is praising Him. We have seen this as the starting place in most of the prayers we have looked at.** Where do most people begin? What is your experience? **Jesus taught this same command...when you pray, He said begin with God: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name..."** Why should we begin here...with God? **We need to be reminded of who God is and we need to be reminded of who we are ..helps us put our prayers n order helping us to prioritize correctly when it comes to God. Otherwise, for the most part, our prayers will be selfish.** Now how does Daniel describe God? **Great and terrible in vs. 4..but also Righteous in verses 7 and 14.** What do these words communicate to us? **They speak of the reality of His nature. But they may be strange because how often would we think to put these 2 in the same prayer to God. When we think of something "terrible" we do not think of God. Our God is an awesome God... awesome in such a way as to be the ONE whom we are to fear...and if we do not regularly dwell on this aspect of God taking into consideration His great and awful power we miss out on understand His majesty. He is also "righteous" in that all that He does is right. We cannot blame God for treating us any way except for how He has told us He would. He cannot lie. He cannot be unfair for He is the One who defines fairness. And He is always loving since He is love. He is righteous in all His ways.** How does Daniel define the words "great and terrible"? **He defines these 2 terms with 2 explanations...God is a covenant keeping God and because of this covenant He has a steadfast love for those who love Him and keep His commandments. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commands."** God is both above us and at the same time with us carrying out all that He promises for

those He has chosen. Daniel combines in this one line the greatness of our God with his tender mercies.

- b. How would we describe the next section of Daniel's prayer in verses 5-15? **Confession and recognition.** What 7 things does he confess that he and the people have done in verses 5-13? **We have sinned; we have done wrong; we have acted wickedly; we have rebelled; we have turned aside from God's commandments and ordinances; we have stopped listening to God's Word preached; we have not sought God's grace.** When you see and hear this confession what does this say to you about your own prayers? How often do we really include this as part of our prayers? Why is this such a "hard" part of prayer? **We hate to admit we are wrong for the most part especially if we are praying publically. When we look at ourselves 9 times out of 10 we will think we are right. I read this illustration a few days ago in a book by another pastor, he said this when referring to how easy it is to delude ourselves, "I am convinced that this is why God allows us to suffer from bad breath: it is His graphic way of teaching us that there is something about us, which we cannot see or detect ourselves, which is unpleasant and very difficult to live with. Isn't it amazing that when we have bad breath you have no idea about it until, perhaps, someone tells you or people start avoiding you? At the dentist the other day I began to feel sorry for him, because he has to look right down into the mouths of so many people whose breath is very difficult to handle. And isn't it amazing too, how difficult it is to tell somebody about their bad breath? We hardly dare mention it even to our dearest friends. If somebody does tell us we have bad breath, we feel devastated and humiliated even to the point of lashing out in disagreement. This is a graphic picture of this whole problem of defensiveness and unwillingness to see something wrong about ourselves."** It can be a sign of true humility when you find a person, specifically a man who willingly confesses while he is praying publically. How do we know that we have something to confess?
- (1) **God gives a standard just like the one that our fathers...the ones Daniel refers to here... had...and that standard clearly lets us know right and wrong...what brings God glory and what does not.**
 - (2) **He gives us His Word written down and proclaimed so that we are without excuse...so we can serve the LORD the way He prescribes...unlike our fathers who have walked away from God's Word and chose to live as they saw fit.**
 - (3) **He gives us His people to hold us accountable and to encourage us in this practice.**
 - (4) **And He gives us "open shame" as Daniel says in vs. 7 and vs. 8. This open shame has at least 3 meanings...**

- **the first being obvious in how we live with our sin openly before others...our sins that are of such a public nature that everyone knows about them...**
 - **but secondly, is the results that God had promised would happen if we continued to live in a way other than He prescribes...this reality is true in the OT as well in the NT. See Matt. 5:25-26.**
 - **thirdly, the word seems to mean confusion/frustration ...as in being frustrated when things consistently go wrong, fall apart and we are constantly finding ourselves frustrated...this may be a sign of God saying to us privately that we have had a wrong perspective on life...that we are not living up to God's standard...that we are not seeing things clearly.**
 - **Fourthly, it clearly is here to remind us that this can often lead to confession and restoration.**
- (5)** Why does God command us to confess our sins...because He wants to humiliate us?
- **He wants us to see the real "me" so that we realize how much we need Him and His people. Daniel started out by recognizing who God is and now he takes these verses to spell out who we are before Him and how in need of His deliverance we are...and also one more thing...how we can't do it on our own.**
 - **So that we are really ready to ask Him for things...**

Sunday School
Prayers of the Bible
Dec. 8, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What 2 parts of Daniels prayer did we discuss last week? **Adoration and Confession.**
2. Why is it important for us to start our prayers out with praise and /or adoration of God?
3. How do we know that we have something to confess?
 - a. **God gives a standard just like the one that our fathers...the ones Daniel refers to here... had...and that standard clearly lets us know right and wrong...what brings God glory and what does not.**
 - b. **He gives us His Word written down and proclaimed so that we are without excuse...so we can serve the LORD the way He prescribes...unlike our fathers who have walked away from God's Word and chose to live as they saw fit.**
 - c. **He gives us His people to hold us accountable and to encourage us in this practice.**
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- (4) Fourthly, it clearly is here to remind us that this can often lead to confession and restoration.**

- 4. Why does God command us to confess our sins...because He wants to humiliate us?
 - a. He wants us to see the real "me" so that we realize how much we need Him and His people. Daniel started out by recognizing who God is and now he takes these verses to spell out who we are before Him and how in need of His deliverance we are...and also one more thing...how we can't do it on our own.**
 - b. So that we are really ready to ask Him for things...**

C. Back to the text. Read Daniel 9:1-19 again.

- 1. How would we describe the last section of Daniel's prayer in verses 15-19?
Supplication.
- 2. Just for fun: Where did he get the idea to pray like this? **From his reading of God's word specifically from Jeremiah 29:10-14. When we read God's Word we also learn "what" to pray for.**
- 3. What is Daniel asking for? **He is asking that God would fulfil His promise:**
 - a. He is asking God to listen God to listen...God said He would iin the Jeremiah passage.**
 - (1) He knows he doesn't deserve to be listened to....**
 - (2) He recognizes the King's position and that the king does not have to do anything simply because someone asks of Him.**
 - (3) But he pleads with God to do as He said He would do and listen**
 - b. Since God delivered His people out of Egypt and brought them into the land He promised their forefathers to give them...restore your people to the land.**
 - c. Restore the holy city Jerusalem.**
 - d. Restore His sanctuary so that He can once again be worshiped rightly.**
 - e. He is asking boldly not for himself but for God's glory that God would do as He promised to do...we come in boldness asking God to do that which He has promised and we will see results. It is not about getting what we want it is about getting what God wants...and even Daniel had to read the Bible to know what God wanted...what God was going to**

do...what God required of His people to do...pray and seek God with our whole hearts.

4. Two weeks ago we saw the results of Jabez' prayer so why not Daniel's. Look at verses 20-27. What things do we see as a response from God because of Daniels obedience to God's Word?
 - a. **Gives him a lot more details than he could have imagined or expected.**
 - b. **Even before Daniel finishes his prayer God sends Gabriel to him to give him an answer. And Gabriel tells Daniel that at the beginning of the prayer word went up to God and He immediately dealt with it. And what does Gabriel tell Daniel?**
 - (1) **Immediately lets him know that he has been heard...God has in fact listened to him!**
 - (2) **That Daniel is greatly loved. Since Daniel was obedient and followed God's prescribed law Daniel revealed his love for the Father and the Father didn't even want to hesitate in showing and telling of His love.**
 - (3) **He has great favor in God's eyes...a well done, if you will ..in this life.**
 - (4) **Gabriel tells him that the word found in Jeremiah and the vision Daniel had 15 years ago are linked and after all this time it will be revealed to him what he must know. Because of God's great love the time is right now for Daniel to know.**
 - c. **In vs. 24 we see the specifics of Daniel prayer answered....and even more than Daniel could imagine. For God would "soon" be raising up Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to lead expeditions of people desiring to return to the promised land and see Jerusalem and the temple restored. There were people who would want to go back to the Land of Israel after all.**
 - d. **Gabriel further said to him words to the effect, "You've been meditating on this figure 'seventy' haven't you? That number '70' has been on your mind for days. I want to encourage you in what is going to happen in seventy periods of seven," i.e. in 490 years' time. The messenger of God proceeded to divide up that period of almost half a millennium into three uneven parts.**
 - (1) **There is going to be "seven 'sevens,'" (9:25), about 49 years, and it will be during that period under Cyrus king of Persia that he will issue a decree for the Old Testament people to return and rebuild Jerusalem. This is the time of Ezra and Nehemiah's struggles and so it is called "times of trouble" (9:25).**
 - (2) **That will be followed by a period of "sixty-two 'sevens'" (9:25). That would be 434 years and it is a mute period on the lips of Gabriel and in fact in the whole of the Bible. It is the period between the Old and New Testaments, when no prophets were sent by God. That**

silence was ultimately broken when John the Baptist began to preach.

(3) Finally, there is going to be one other 'seven' (9:26 & 27). During this intense period the most important events of all history will occur: two are singled out:

- ***“the Anointed One, the Messiah will be cut off” (9:26); He will cry, “My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me ?” as He is cut off bearing our guilt from His Father’s favor. “He will have nothing,” (9:26) so total will be His rejection by men and God. Yet by this death He will put an end to the Levitical “sacrifices and offerings” (9:27). A new “covenant with many” (9:27) will be confirmed in His shed blood.***
- ***“The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary” (9:26). So Jerusalem and its temple are going to be destroyed yet again. What need will there ever be for the Temple now that the Messiah has taken away the sin of the world? The ruler referred to will be the Roman prince Titus Vespasianus and this destruction will take place in the year 70 AD. “And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (9:27). That is, once again, as with the abominations perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, heathen rites and emblems will be installed in God’s Temple by Titus. The destruction will continue until the decreed end. Dr. Edward J. Young writes, “The precise point of termination of the period of seventy sevens is not revealed. The emphasis, rather, is not so much upon the beginning and termination of this period as it is upon the great results which the period has been set apart to accomplish” (The New Bible Commentary Revised, I.V.P., p. 700).***

- e. **But even more than he could imagine...no matter what your end times view...we see here God promising that He would ultimately deal with all sin just as He promised as well.**
- f. **And that He would ultimately restore His people to Himself.**
- g. **Daniel’s prayer was a means in seeing this all accomplished since he did exactly what God had said would have to occur and then the blessing was received.**
- h. **Daniel has lived most of his life in Babylon. The return to Jerusalem during the long years of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar seemed an increasingly impossible idea. Yet the Scriptures said that in 70 years the exile would end.**

5. What lies in store for God’s people?

- a. **The return to Jerusalem. Certainly that. But no lasting peace in this world. Hope lay not in the land but in the Lord from heaven.**
- b. **Let Daniel and all God’s people look to Him.**

- c. Gabriel summarizes the six Messianic accomplishments of this period of seventy sevens (9:24):**
- (1) Transgression will be finished. Caused by men, sin and guilt have lived on as an ugly reality. But the Messiah will effectively put transgression away with a shout of triumph, "It is finished!" God's alienation from us will be ended.**
 - (2) Sin's dominion will be put to an end. This reality of the termination of the guilt, dominion and condemnation of sin is repeated.**
 - (3) Wickedness will be atoned for. It will be by the sacrifice of the Messiah that the end of sin's control will be achieved.**
 - (4) Everlasting righteousness will be brought in. This righteousness was first outside this world but it will be brought in from God through the Messiah and it replaces the sin which has been atoned for.**
 - (5) The vision and prophecy will be sealed up and completed. In the Old Testament dispensation the prophet represented God who made Himself known by visions to His servants. That entire prophetic institution was preparatory for the coming and words of the Son of God when the end of that anticipatory period would be sealed.**
 - (6) The most holy place will once again be anointed. This phrase appears to refer to the enduring of the Messiah with the Spirit of God...also a reference to the dwelling of God...His Church.**
6. What aspects of this prayer should we be incorporating into our prayers to make them more acceptable to God?
- a. Prayers based in a full understanding of His Word.**
 - b. Beginning our prayers focused on God.**
 - c. Confessing our sins.**
 - d. Making supplications based in and on things that God wants...not on just what we want unless those two actually match up.**

Prayers of the Bible

Dec. 15, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How does Daniels prayer breakdown? What parts were highlighted?
 - a. **Adoration/Praise**
 - b. **Confession**
 - c. **Supplication**
2. What is Daniel expecting God to do? **Exactly what He promised He would do?**
3. So what is Daniel's prayer based on?
 - a. **His knowledge of God's character and...**
 - b. **His knowledge of Scripture so that he knows God's will...and knows what God would have him to pray.**

C. John 16:31-17:26- Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. This is all taking place in the upper room the night of His betrayal. Jesus was staring at the cross in His mind.

1. Why do you suppose it has been given this title?
 - a. **Because within it Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples and His Church.**
 - b. **PCA pastor and theologian James Montgomery Boice once said of this passage of Scripture: "The Scottish Reformer, John Knox, had this prayer read to him every day during his final sickness, and in the closing moments of his life he testified that these verses continued to be a great comfort and a source of strength for his conflict. This prayer should be to us something of what the burning bush was to Moses, for we hear God speaking, and we should put off our shoes and bow humbly, being about to tread on the most hallowed ground."**
2. Look at 16:31-33, what had Jesus been doing? **Preaching to His disciples.** But then what do we see Him doing in verse 1 of chapter 17? **Switches His conversation from the disciples to His Father.** What does He teach us here as He passes from preaching to prayer? **I love what Susan Hunt says in her book, "The more intimately a true woman knows her heavenly Father, the more often she will shift her focus to Him and commit people and situations to His sovereign care." This not just true of the true woman but also of the true man of God.**

3. This starting with Himself is not unusual at all. The High Priest would often make his sacrifice first as the people were prepared to meet with the LORD in the OT. Here is our High Priest. What all do you suppose is in the mind of Christ when He addresses the 1st person of the Godhead as Father?
- Praise and adoration**
 - Submission**
 - Intimate relationship**
 - What example is He giving to His disciples?
- e. What does this communicate to us about what we are to be thinking about?
- One of the things that come immediately to mind is that we are part of family...that we can call Him Father. The privilege alone is amazing as we think about that.**
 - Next, everything we need and want to say to and about God can and is included in this title. If we have a Jesus understanding our the title we are praising God, being humble and submissive before Him and recognizing the privileged/ unearned and undeserved relationship that we have with Him... all at the same time.**
4. What “hour” does He speak of in His prayer? **The “hour” of His humiliation and His exaltation. This hour was no longer remote or a possibility in the eyes of the disciples. These were things that needed to be said to the Father before the crucifixion.**
5. Jesus will be asking 5 things of the Father (making 5 petitions) in this whole prayer. Here in verses 1-5 what is the first thing He asks for and what is the reason for this request?
- Seeking glory for Himself so that He might glorify the Father. When WE seek our glory we do so at the expense of the glory of God...but when Jesus sought the Father to glorify Him He is asking rightly...for the glorification of the Son is also the glorification of the Father. When the Son is honored the Father is honored because they are one.**
 - With His mission nearly complete He seeks God to restore to Himself the fullness of His glory that He once had before the world existed. That is His external glory. He never lost His internal glory...that is His divine attributes...His divine character.**
 - The reason for this request is to be able to bring His mission to a conclusion...glorifying the Father by redeeming all who the Father had given to Him. (See also John 6:37, 44) His elective purposes were hinging on God glorifying Him. Unless Christ is glorified...that is unless He rises from the dead and ascends to heaven the work of redemption will not be accomplished.**
 - In this 1st petition of this prayer, how does Jesus define eternal life? **Knowing God... Remember what we saw in Titus 1 when Paul gave the doctrines of the common faith that all true Christians ought to believe? 1. God’s elective purposes; 2.**

Each of us having a full knowledge of the truth...that is God and His word.

- e. In this 1st petition of this prayer, what elements of prayer do we see?
 - (1) Praise for the Father**
 - (2) Praying according to God's eternal plan and purposes.**
 - (3) Petition for Himself....so that He can glorify the Father.**
- f. Just a side question: Based on this first petition, what would you say is the purpose for the cross in God the Father's mind?
 - (1) His own glory and Jesus having the opportunity to do just that...**
 - (2) To ensure the salvation of those given to Jesus by the Father...and only those.**
- g. How does having a true understanding of God's elective purposes help us in our prayer life?
- h. What difference do you think it would make if we were to ask in our prayers: How can I glorify You in this situation or that relationship?

Prayers of the Bible
Dec. 22, 2013

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

- 1. What did Jesus have in His mind when He addresses God as Father? And what does this communicate to us about what we are to be thinking about?
 - a. One of the things that come immediately to mind is that we are part of family...that we can call Him Father. The privilege alone is amazing as we think about that.**
 - b. Next, everything we need and want to say to and about God can and is included in this title. If we have a Jesus understanding our the title we are praising God, being humble and submissive before Him and recognizing the privileged/ unearned and undeserved relationship that we have with Him... all at the same time.**
- 2. In Jesus' first petition of His prayer found in John 17:1-5, what elements of prayer do we see?
 - a. Praise for the Father**
 - b. Praying according to God's eternal plan and purpose.**
 - c. Petition for Himself...with the purpose of glorifying the Father.**
- 3. Based on this first petition, what would you say is the purpose for the cross in the mind of God the Father?
 - a. His own glory and Jesus having the opportunity to do just that...**
 - b. To ensure the salvation of those given to Jesus by the Father...and only those.**

- C. Let's look at the next section as He prays for His disciples. 17:6-19. There are 2 petitions in this section of this prayer.

1. What are the disciples doing while Jesus is praying? **Listening...perhaps praying along with Him.** What does this teach us about what we should be doing as God speaks to us through His Word?

2. As we listen to Jesus praying for His disciples that the Father had given to Him what do we see here that should shape the way we pray for others?
 - a. **Nothing here is about what he might gain.**
 - b. **He is very specific in His prayer and requests for His disciples.**
 - c. **He prays that God the Father would keep those whom He had given to Jesus... Twice He prays, “keep them by means of your name” (ESV says, “keep them in your name ...or as Jesus says, “I kept them in your name.”) this is what is called the perseverance of the saints...God preserves those who are His to the end...This is true even though Jesus goes on to say that He has preserved them while He ...God...was with them. “Keep” is pregnant with meaning...at least these things come to mind:**
 - (1) **Keep them safe...**
 - (2) **Keep them pursuing holiness...**
 - (3) **Keep them by giving them a deep hatred for their sin and the sins of the world...**
 - (4) **Keep them by giving them a heart bent toward repentance...**
 - (5) **There are others but these are what came to my mind as I read this and wondered what He meant with this phrase.**
 - d. **Not asking God to make His disciples lives “easy” ... instead is praying that they be able to carry out God’s will no matter the circumstances. Not asking the Father to take them out of the world but to strengthen them and prepare them/us to be in the world for His glory.**
 - e. **He is expecting them to act according to God’s will based in the knowledge of His word...to have an intimate knowledge of this Word...just like what was expected of the believers in the OT.**
 - f. What does He pray for specifically for them?
 - (1) **He prays that their joy would be full.**
 - (2) **He sends them out to proclaim the gospel.**
 - (3) **He speaks of consecrating Himself just like the High priest was required to do before he could make intercession for God’s people. As regular people we should confess our sins before we intercede for others.**
 - (4) **He prays for them that they would be sanctified by His Truth.**
 - (5) **Giving us an example of what we ought to be praying for one another.**

- D. Lastly, let’s look at what he prays for the church in 17:20-26.
 1. Is there anything about this prayer that gives you pause at all? **For me it is the answer to this question that gets to me. What was He doing**

just hours before he would endure His humiliation? He was praying for us...you and me!

2. Trivia alert!!! If I ask you where does Jesus pray for you, what would you say? How would this information be helpful as you are talking to others about Jesus?
3. What is the next petition asked for here and why is it important? **Jesus is praying for unity among God's people. Oneness among God's people is crucial in our experiencing the grace of God to its fullest.** How is this unity manifested in God's people?
 - a. **By virtue of all true believers being in Christ...You are in Christ and I am in Christ there is a bond already that ought to be evident in our actions.**
 - b. **This unity is to be so evident that it is seen by unbelievers. It is important that the world see this unity so that they will know God had sent Christ and... that God loved us that much...which means our unity is to be as Christ defined it... "I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another." It is unfortunate that so much of what the world sees is disunity within the church. They have seen so much disunity that that is all they see even when we are loving properly they don't see it any more. No wonder they have little to know respect for the God we profess...since we don't live up to the standard of our profession...why should the world care about what we believe.**
4. Just a thought or dare I say a question: How does this prayer answer this question: Does God the Father love Christ more than He does His children? **In verse 23, Jesus uses a small word from the Greek to make His point... "kathos" which means "just as" or "to the same degree that" when the ESV translates... "loved them even as you loved me."** How might the right understanding of this question change the way you approach the Father in the future?
5. The last petition that Jesus makes to His Father (found in verses 24-26) is that His own would with Him. Not only was He concerned that we be IN Him but also that we would be with Him...that we would see His glory. He wanted for us what Moses had asked for. Now what can we learn from this section to help shape our prayers for those yet to be brought into the kingdom? **In our supplication we should be careful about what we ask for...it needs to be based in God's will and Word.**
6. What were some of the things we saw in Jesus' High priestly prayer that should cause us pause?
 - a. **He is praying for us.**
 - b. **That we are His by virtue the fact that the Father had chosen us before the foundations of the world to be adopted at a time when He stated.**

c. That we need to listen when Jesus speaks specifically about and to us.

7. What principles did we see from Jesus' prayer for Himself, for His disciples and for us that we should include in our own prayers?
8. We talked a couple of weeks ago about answers to the prayers of God's people and we were able to point to some specific ways God had answered the prayers. What answers to Jesus' prayer here have we read about or seen ourselves?

Dec. 29, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

9. What were some of the things we saw in Jesus' High priestly prayer that should cause us pause?
- d. He is praying for us.**
 - e. That we are His by virtue the fact that the Father had chosen us before the foundations of the world to be adopted at a time when He stated.**
 - f. That we need to listen when Jesus speaks specifically about and to us.**
10. What principles did we see from Jesus' prayer for Himself, for His disciples and for us that we should include in our own prayers?

C. The last prayer we will look at this year is Acts 4:23-31. Many have said that this prayer is modeled after Hezekiah's prayer in Is. 37:16-20 which leads us to conclude that one of the reasons God placed these prayers in the Bible is in fact as examples for us to emulate.

1. How important is the role of prayer in the life of these believers? What is the evidence of its importance in this text?
- a. On their release they went straight to the other believers and told them what had been said...**
 - b. And immediately they began to pray together to God.**
2. Where do you suppose they learn to pray like this? **There wasn't a class that we know of...or even a topical sermon series on how to pray, the need to pray together, or simply the need to pray. It is in and of itself a sign of the Spirit working in His people to drive them to prayer as if it was second nature... many of whom were brand new believers. And not just driving them to prayer but driving them to prayer corporately. (See 2:42-47...the crucible of learning how to do Christianity and be a Christian.)**
3. Up to this point we have looked at prayers by individuals but now we are looking at corporate prayer. Remember last time how Jesus emphasized unity...this is one of the ways that God's people display that unity... in praying together.
4. How do these people address God in the beginning of their prayer?
- a. Sovereign- "Despotes" translated here as Sovereign Lord...is a Greek term used of a slave owner or a ruler of unchallengeable power...**
 - b. Creator... "you who created..."**
 - c. The God of revelation... who spoke to David by His Spirit...the God of revelation...the intimate God who loves**
5. What does verse 28 tell us that these new and old believers "knew" about the nature of God?

- a. **He predestined these events to occur just as they did...He is sovereign over all!**
 - b. **Christ's death was not an afterthought.**
 - c. **To believe in the sovereignty of God one MUST believe that these actions were predetermined before the foundations of the world... part of the eternal plan of God.**
 - d. **These words do not even hint at the possibility that God was waiting to see if we would need to be saved before He determined to send the Savior...or... that God merely looked down the proverbial tunnel of time and passively saw Jesus crucified for "all" people...which opens the door to some not "choosing" to be saved...hence saying that Christ's death and resurrection only makes it possible for those who chose to be Christians to become Christians. Saying that His death is sufficient for all to believe even waters down this doctrine which emphatically states that Christ's death and resurrection SECURED life for ALL who are His.**
 - e. **How did they come by this knowledge of God's complete sovereignty? The presence of the Spirit, again and the clear teaching of God's Word by Peter.**
 - f. **If it was so easy for them to see this doctrine why do you suppose it is so hard for many in the Church to see it today? A practical answer to this could be that they had such a "high" view of God already. An understanding that they had been brought up to believe in the absolute authority of God or in the case of the pagans...their gods...with a little "g".**
 - g. **While that sounds plausible, what is ultimately wrong with that conclusion? God or gods simply did not play that big of a place in their lives or they would have already been part of the remnant/ part of the Church. They couldn't simply "get back to God" as many would have us do in our nation today...as if people can just choose to get back into a relationship that time has shown hasn't been there for a long time. What was happening was a true transformation in these people...in the same proportion as a Paul. Within that transformation the "dots were being connected" for the Jews and answers to the questions of life were being made clear for the first time too the pagan...hearts were changed by God so that eyes and ears were opened.**
6. What are some interesting characteristics of this prayer? How might it be a bit different than you would expect given all that Peter and John have been through?
- a. **It is corporate in nature.**
 - b. **They filled their minds with thoughts of God's divine sovereignty before making a request...**
 - (1) **God of creation vs. 24;**

- (2) **He is the God of revelation, who spoke through the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (vs. 25-26; Psalm 2);**
 - (3) **He is the God of history ...who caused even His enemies to do what His power and will had decided beforehand would happen (vs. 27-28)**
 - c. **It is not spoken in a defeatist way...of “woe is us they are on to us”, on the contrary...**
 - d. **It exhibits the boldness they are praying for...**
 - e. **It is short...long prayers may have their place...but this one gets to the point of the matter.**
 - f. **God’s sovereignty can be summed up in 3 words according to this prayer... made, spoke and decided... Their world revolved around the characteristics of the One True God...His creation , His revelation and His history...**
7. What specifically do they ask God for to enable them to stand against the coming persecution in verse 29-30?
- a. **Consider the threats of their enemies...What do you find interesting with this request?**
 - (1) **this is not a prayer that these threats or the ones making them would fall under some divine judgment**
 - (2) **nor even that the threats would go unaccomplished, so that the church could be safe,**
 - (3) **but only that God would consider them...the Greek word for consider means that God would bear them in His mind...that he be mindful of them...making sure that God is aware even though He is.**
 - (4) **They never ask for vengeance or for the destruction of their enemies...who are God’s enemies.**
 - b. **Enable your servants (slaves) to speak God’s Word with great boldness...undeterred by the Council’s threats or prohibition...this kind of boldness seems to produce at least 3 things:**
 - (1) **Astonishment**
 - (2) **Strife**
 - (3) **Division...When the Lord grants this gift to His people they are able to speak eloquently and effectively in a hostile environment**
 - c. **That God would reveal Himself in healing and in signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus. They ask for mercy...knowing that the Word and the signs would go together...with the signs only serving to confirm the Word.**
8. What answer does God give to them that He has heard their prayers in verse 31?

- a. **The place was shaken...their place of worship was shaken...and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke boldly the Word of God. All our confirmations of the power of the Spirit at work...shaking of the place would be a confirmation from God using something familiar to confirm His presence and the power of the Spirit in them afresh would be revealed in their witness of word and deed.**
 - b. **God sends a new outpouring of the Spirit something that happened then each time believers were being called upon to do something specific for God...a mission, if you will. ..in this case a confirmation and a strengthening to keep doing what they had been doing so effectively or the Sanhedrin wouldn't have been so upset.**
 - c. **It is an answer to prayer as well...but they are first and foremost signs of what God had already confirmed in sending His Spirit into these people. What I mean by this is that we have to put the first thing first...or... it may appear that we are saying that God does what He does because we prayed...is what it always sounds like when Christian say God answered my prayers because I prayed. He does answer our prayers but He does it from our perspective "when" we pray. When we are in prayer...the Spirit is already revealing Himself because we went there...to prayer...in the first place.**
 - d. **We see the Spirit at work here in their boldness before they ever prayed for it.**
9. So with all that we have seen, why do we need to pray?
- a. **The big reason is this: He commands and expects us to pray to stay in relationship with Him.**
 - b. **But, it is also the methodology that God uses to reveal to us His grace. When we pray we are of a mind to see and experience God's answers in this temporal world. When we don't seek Him through His Word and prayer we will never fully experience His presence and we will always question what God is doing...never being able to fully trust Him.**
 - c. **Prayer along with studying and implementing His Word along with the sacraments and church discipline are ALL the building blocks of the faith. Neglecting any of these put the others in jeopardy of being shallow at best and non-existent at worst.**