

Supplications and Prayers

Introduction

What are we to pray for? We tend to think that prayers are for us to cry out to God to fulfill our needs. Even in our so-called prayer meetings, the things prayed for usually relate to individual needs of ourselves and our friends. Prayers for food, jobs, money, sicknesses, circumstantial problems, conflict and things of this nature. But what kind of examples do we have from the Scriptures concerning prayer. I can't find any examples of prayers that are focused on our individual needs of provision or protecting. Instead I find prayers that are much broader and deeper than physical needs—prayers that deal with the work of the Lord and the extension of His Kingdom rule.

Three Spheres of Responsibility

When Paul was speaking to the Corinthians he spoke of his sphere of responsibility that was given to him by the Lord and how it extended to them.

2 Corinthians 10:13 NASB

(13) But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

Paul was speaking about his sphere of ministry, which is the third sphere of responsibility that we begin to walk in as we mature in the things of God. The first sphere of responsibility is for ourselves and the second sphere is for those close to us which includes family, friends and others that God might bring to us. In many ways these spheres of responsibility correspond to the three areas of maturity spoken of by John in his epistle [*1 John 2:13-14*]. While much could be said about these, this article will focus on these spheres as they relate to our prayers and their subject matter.

The First Sphere

When we first come to know the Lord we are a babe in the Spirit. The things that concern us are our needs. Because of this our prayers reflect our concern over needs which usually relate to

1. **provision** such as food, clothing, shelter, health;,
2. **security** such as better job or finances; and
3. **protection** such as conflict resolution with others, difficult circumstances, or temptation from the Enemy.

As we mature in this sphere we have to learn two specific lessons before the Lord will anoint us in the second sphere of responsibility. These lessons were given to us by the Lord Himself just prior to giving

us the model prayer.

Matthew 6:5-8 NASB

- (5) "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.
- (6) "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.
- (7) "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.
- (8) "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

The lessons were are to learn:

1. Don't be like the hypocrites. Don't pray before men to be seen as spiritual; but, pray privately, that is, in secret to our Father.
2. Don't be like the Gentiles, that is, heathens, who use meaningless repetition of words; but, instead, simple remind the Lord because our Father knows our needs before we ask.

We learn that our Father knows what we need, that He cares for us and will withhold no good thing from us. This build faith and confidence in our relationship with the Lord and our place and function in His Kingdom and it is reflected in our prayers.

The Second Sphere

We slowly are made aware of the needs and problems of others, usually those closest to us first. We enter the second sphere of responsibility when we care enough about what is going on with someone else to enter into their struggle with them with the full knowledge that God's glory is open to them and that the government of His grace can be established in them. We can do this without interfering in the other person's affairs, sometimes without them even being aware that we are praying for them. This becomes our first inkling of the idea of intercession, which begins when our prayers before the Throne begin to release the strength and grace of the Kingdom of God into the sphere of responsibility of another person.

While we may be led by the Spirit to pray for some specific physical needs, our intercession should primarily focus on spiritual things and the work of the Holy Spirit in their heart and circumstances. We have an example of this type of prayer when Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:16-19 NASB

- (16) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;
- (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.
- (18) *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope

of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

(19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Paul prayed specifically for two things;

1. that they would receive a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him;
2. that the eyes of their hearts (understanding) would be enlightened [See “[Foundation of the Inner Man](#)” for more on this]

Paul prayed for these two things so that they would know three more things:

1. what is the hope of His calling;
2. what are the riches of His inheritance in the saints; and
3. what is the greatness of His power toward us who believe.

If we were to sum up these three “whats” into single words they would be 1) **hope**, 2) **value**, and 3) **power**. It is important for us all to know our hope in the Lord, our value to the Lord, and His power that is available to us.

We have many things to learn from Paul about praying for others. His intercession went beneath the surface and worked toward releasing the character and strength of God's Kingdom into lives and situations. He had discovered this for himself and made supplication for others that they might know the same.

We are more inclined to pray surface, or emergency, prayers. As we said earlier in this article, if we have a prayer meeting and ask for requests, generally the needs that are presented are for sicknesses, finances, family problems, trips, programs, and losses. We want immediate answers and quick fixes. But Paul's praying reached beneath the surface of life to lay hold on things eternal and that pertained to God's Kingdom. He asked for things that, if they find their release in us, will bring sickness and loss and need over into the strength and grace of God. He sought release and answers from a resource far beyond what the world affords us.

The Third Sphere

As we learn to intercede for others we will begin to move into the third sphere of responsibility which relates to our work or ministry in the Kingdom of God. This will bring us into conflict with spiritual forces that rule over areas such as villages, towns, cities, states, nations or even institutions, corporations, clans, tribes, businesses, etc.

Ephesians 6:12 NASB

(12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

While much has been written about spiritual warfare, we need to remember that the war has been won

by Jesus, our Lord. However, until He returns we will still have to fight “mopping” up battles. We are not called to win the war but we are called to do the work assigned to us—our sphere of responsibility. So, when we wrestle with spiritual forces it should relate to what the Lord has asked us to do in ministry.

We have a good example with Paul and his request for the type of prayer he wanted the Ephesians to be praying for him.

Ephesians 6:19-20 NASB

- (19) and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,
- (20) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

His prayer request was not for his physical needs, nor the problems of his circumstances, but for him to have the opportunity to proclaim the mysteries of the gospel which was his ministry.

To Sum Up

After you have matured beyond the issue of your own needs, embrace in intercessory prayer for the people that you are concerned about. Let your concern be turned into supplication on their behalf before the Throne of His Grace. Let your concern encompass as many others as you feel you can hold before the Lord in intercession. Make a list. You can even call it a “prayer list”. With some on your list you can communicate what you are praying about and with others you may need to not say anything to them.

We need to know how to pray properly. In previous lessons we learned from the Lord's words about **how** to pray. Now we need to learn from Paul. This is part of the Lord's divine instruction to show us **what** to pray. Paul lays out his prayers of intercession in four significant passages which we will look at in our next lesson.

Paul never mentioned sicknesses or personal needs. He never brought it before the Lord that the people might be having financial difficulties or agonizing circumstances from which they should be released. Instead, he reached for the power, character and qualities of God's Kingdom and prayed for their release.