

Be anxious for nothing

The apostle Paul declared in his letter to the Philippians, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God'. There will be times when we are concerned, worried or anxious over certain situations and matters. It is important to understand how we approach prayer when we are anxious. James warned us that our faith will be tested by various trials to produce patience and endurance. In the midst of the testing of our faith, we do not pray and ask God to deliver us from the source of our anxiety. In the first case, our anxiety is the problem, not *the source* of our anxiety. We cannot pray to be delivered from a trial of faith which God is using to produce the enduring qualities of sonship in us.

The Lord does not respond to the person whose prayer is motivated by anxiety. James wrote, 'That man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord'. Instead of being motivated by anxiety, we need to wait on the Lord and pray in the Spirit. The Lord is able to replace our burden of anxiety with the burden of the Spirit of God that He brings to us. When we pray in the Spirit according to the will of God, we come to peace because we know that God has the matter in His hand. This is the 'peace that surpasses all understanding'. The Spirit may not have told us how the situation or circumstance will unfold. Nevertheless, we can believe for His will to be done. If the Spirit does illuminate the particular will of God concerning the matter, we can confidently pray and let our requests be made known to God.

References:

Php 4:6-7 Luk 10:41-42
Jas 1:2-4, 7 1Pe 1:6-7
Joh 5:15-16

Further Study: Matthew 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 1

Tested by the fiery trial

Anxiety is a significant problem for many Christians. King David implored the Lord saying, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me'. He was inviting God to test him so that his prayer was motivated by the Spirit and not anxiety. The Lord uses a fiery trial to test our heart. When we present ourselves to the Lord at the altar, He immediately draws us into the refining fiery trial. The stumbling block for many Christians is that they draw back as they encounter the fire of God. This is the fiery trial that tests our heart and causes the aroma of our sonship to ascend before God. As God smells the soothing aroma, He identifies us by name and we have authority to enter the most holy place.

We recall the account of Noah who built an altar and offered burnt offerings to the Lord after the flood. The Scripture accounts that the Lord smelled the soothing aroma and responded to him. Noah had sought the Lord without any requests. He desired to know the Lord, be known by the Lord, and remain connected to the covenant will of God. The Scripture accounts that Noah was 'a righteous man, blameless in his time'. He 'walked with God' by making offering and by prayer. The Lord desires that we proceed from the altar to the throne of grace. He wants us to move from the testing of our faith to the travail of intercession. We must resist the inclination to move from the trial to anxiety. When we wait on the Lord, the Holy Spirit is able to give us peace in the midst of the fiery trial. This is the fruit of praying 'at all times in the Spirit'.

References:

Psa 139:23-24 Gen 6:9
Heb 10:35-39 Rom 8:6
Gen 8:20 Eph 6:18

Further Study:

Malachi 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

Meaningless repetition

If our prayer is motivated by anxiety, it will become 'meaningless repetition'. Jesus said, 'When you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words'. We cannot draw near to God based on anxiety, as if our anxious thoughts are the substance of prayer. The Lord will not respond to us unless He smells the aroma of our offering. This is the aroma of the anointing oil of Christ upon us, the aroma of the intercession of Christ and the aroma of our incense. Anxiety indicates a lack of trust in the Lord. It will, by definition, imply that our whole life is not given to Him. We will not be offering ourselves at the altar of burnt offering. We will not be presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice because the fear of death has enslaved us and replaced faith in our hearts. This is why king Solomon wrote, 'Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down'.

The cares of the world restrict our capacity to hear and apply the word of God. Our Christian life will become unfruitful. Rather than waiting on God in prayer, the spirit of the world entices us to control our environment and determine our own outcomes. We cannot pray and compel God to take action if we are motivated by the cares of the world. James described this situation when he said, 'You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.' We must bring all our anxious thoughts and cast them upon the Lord, knowing that He cares for us. As the Holy Spirit sanctifies our prayer, we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We know that those who are humble will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

References:

Mat 6:7 Jas 4:3
Luk 8:25 1Pe 5:6
Pro 12:25 Heb 11:27

Further Study:

Luke 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

Praying in the Spirit

We recall the account of Paul travelling to Ephesus and meeting some disciples there. The first notable question he asked them was, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' Upon learning that they did not, Paul immediately 'laid his hands upon them; the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying'. God desires that every Christian is baptised in the Holy Spirit. The freedom to pray in other tongues is fundamental to an effective prayer life. The apostle Paul plainly said, 'I wish that you all spoke in tongues'.

Prayer led by the Holy Spirit enables us to observe the events occurring in our life and the lives of others, from a spiritual perspective. Jesus said, 'Learn the parable from the fig tree; when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near'. He was not making an agricultural observation. Jesus was highlighting that prayer leads us to understand what God is doing in the world and in the seasons of our own life. In contrast to this, those who lack spiritual insight will simply assume that all things continue as they have from the beginning.

When we regularly pray in the Spirit, we will gain spiritual insight and understanding into the circumstances which are transpiring around us. We know, far beyond our own sight and cognitive reasoning, what God is doing. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'He who is spiritual discerns all things'. Jesus said, 'When the Spirit of truth comes He will guide you into all truth; whatever He hears He will speak and He will disclose to you what is to come'. Most importantly, when we pray in the Spirit, we are joining the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

References:

Act 19:2, 6 1Jn 4:1
1Co 14:5 Joh 16:13
Mat 24:32 2Pe 3:4

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 4

Prayer for edification

The first dimension of prayer in the Spirit is our personal prayer language. This is the time we spend in our own personal secret place, praying in other tongues, during the course of the week. And it is also the manner in which we first pray when we assemble together for corporate prayer meetings. We refresh ourselves when we pray with this personal devotional tongue. Paul summarised the goal of our personal prayer in the Spirit when he said, 'The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself'. We have an individual accountability to build ourselves up through prayer. We do this by waiting on the Lord and praying in the Spirit. Jude wrote that we build ourselves up on our most holy faith when we pray in the Spirit.

If the focus of the first dimension of prayer in the Spirit is our personal edification, the focus of the second dimension of prayer in the Spirit is the edification of others. The apostle Paul specifically asked the Christians in Colossae to 'continue earnestly in prayer' for him. He requested that they ask God to open a door for the preaching of the word. Like the early church, we must be continually devoted to a fellowship of prayer. When we assemble together for occasions of prayer, we will regularly be aware of the needs of others. As we pray in other tongues, we are waiting together and finding the mind of Christ. We wait to see who is burdened with the initiative to pray for these needs. Our corporate goal is to advance beyond collective prayer in tongues, to two or three witnessing in the Spirit and praying with a sense of prophetic authority. Paul explained, 'For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.'

References:

1Co 14:2-4 Col 4:3
1Co 3:10-11 Act 2:42
Jud 1:20

Further Study:

Isaiah 40

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

Intercessory prayer

There will be occasions in prayer when the Holy Spirit falls upon us in a sovereign way. This dimension of praying in the Spirit takes us beyond the needs of others that we know about and are already motivated to pray for. The Holy Spirit is able to sovereignly join us to the imminent burden of the Father to bring forth and minister life. This is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit when He makes intercession through us according to the will of God. We will be praying in the Spirit with 'groanings too deep for words'. This may become a travail of strong crying and tears for us, even though we may not know what the Holy Spirit is praying for! We recall that Jesus persevered in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane by the power of Eternal Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings this same capacity of Eternal Spirit to enable us to persevere in intercessory prayer. Eternal Spirit is the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God.

The outcome of persevering in prayer of this kind is that the person we are interceding for will receive a miraculous measure of grace from God. For example, if a brother or sister in Christ is confronted with a difficult decision, the outcome of intercession could be that they receive a word of wisdom concerning the way ahead. Alternatively, a person may receive grace for healing or the grace of provision as the outcome of another's intercessory prayer. With this goal in view, it is important that we apply ourselves to personal intercessory prayer and regularly join the fellowship of corporate intercession in our prayer meetings. Intercessory prayer is the foundation upon which the grace of life is given to others during our body ministry time each Sunday.

References:

Rom 8:26

Heb 9:14

Luk 22:44

Eph 6:18

2Co 1:11

1Co 1:4-5

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Acts 10

Proverbs 8

Miraculous outcomes

The book of Acts records the imprisonment of the apostle Peter by king Herod. We read that ‘Peter was kept in prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God’. Suddenly, an angel appeared in Peter’s cell. His chains fell off his hands and he was safely led by the angel outside the prison’s gate. This all occurred while the guards remained asleep. Peter proceeded to the ‘house of Mary where many were gathered together praying’. We observe that the prayer meeting in Mary’s house and Peter’s miraculous escape from prison, were occurring at the same time. We conclude that Peter was rescued from prison because it was God’s desire to sovereignly intervene. But more importantly, we conclude that the intercessory prayer being offered up in Mary’s house was heard and answered by God. They evidently found the mind of Christ in their prayer meeting and their request for Peter’s release was according to the will of God.

It is incredible to consider that when we join the intercession of Jesus Christ, our prayer can have these kinds of miraculous outcomes. We are reminded that ‘the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much’. When we are led by the Spirit to pray and intercede, we can make requests according to the covenant purpose of God. The prophet Amos wrote, ‘Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel’. God’s will is being accomplished on earth by the intercessory prayer of faithful believers. This is an amazing privilege and solemn responsibility. As we reflect on James’ words, ‘You do not have because you do not ask’, we can only wonder what provisions of life and sovereign intervention will not transpire without prayer.

References:

Jas 5:16 Luk 22:32
Amo 3:7 Heb 7:25
Jas 4:2 1Ti 2:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Acts 12

Proverbs 9

Pray at all times for the saints

The apostle Paul understood the outcome of corporate prayer. He urged the Roman Christians to ‘strive together with him in their prayers to God for him’. In this case, he needed to be rescued from those who were disobedient in Judea. In a similar way, he asked the Ephesians to pray on his behalf so that utterance would be given to him to boldly declare the mystery of the gospel. He also asked the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and Hebrew believers to pray for him. Paul was not uncertain concerning his mandate, nor unwilling to fulfil it. Rather, he understood the powerful effect of churches praying together. He rejoiced in the help that he received through the prayers of the Corinthians, testifying of the ‘favour bestowed on him through the prayers of the many’. Those who were praying for Paul were not necessarily involved in preaching, writing or travelling for the sake of the gospel. But they were, nevertheless, actively supporting the ministry of Paul by intercessory prayer.

In this season, we are being refreshed concerning the mandate of prayer. We are called to ‘pray at all times for all the saints’. As the gospel is proclaimed throughout our cities, regions, nation, and indeed the world, we can all participate and help in that work. This will only be possible if we become people who are committed to intercessory prayer. When we assemble for corporate prayer, we are not firstly coming to receive grace personally. Instead, we come in faith that the Holy Spirit will join us to the work of intercession. This will ensure that our prayer is according to the will of God. Our motivation should be to bring forth and minister life to others. The Holy Spirit is actively strengthening us so that we can pray in the Spirit without ceasing, while we wait for conviction concerning the specific mind of Christ for each meeting.

References:

Rom 15:30-31 Act 1:14
Eph 6:18-19 Rom 12:12
2Co 1:11

Further Study:

Colossians 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Waiting on the Lord

When we assemble together for prayer, we are drawing near to wait quietly before the Lord, seeking to join the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In contrast to this, we are reminded of the account of the golden calf when the Israelites were required to wait patiently for Moses. When Moses returned from Mount Sinai, he saw that the people were 'out of control'. Rather than waiting quietly for the word of the Lord, the people sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play. Whenever we are motivated by anxiety, we will take measures to gain control of our environment. However, our behaviour will be 'out of control' if we give ground to anxiety, rather than waiting in prayer and committing our fears and uncertainties into the hands of God.

The outcome of waiting is that we are led by the Spirit who 'is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think'. This is a tremendous encouragement regarding how substantial our prayer can become when we wait. The apostle Paul instructed us saying, 'When you come together to eat, wait for one another'. He was speaking about the communion, but we could equally apply this principle to our prayer meetings. We have the opportunity to pray by course when we gather together. We are able to pray with a common mind because the Holy Spirit is active among us, anointing us with the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of supplication, and the Spirit of intercession. We join the fellowship of prayer so that the mind of Christ is confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. As we pray by course, led by the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ is progressively articulated and becomes clearer among those who have gathered together to pray.

References:

Exo 32:6, 25 Php 2:2
Eph 3:20 Hab 2:3
1Co 11:33

Further Study:

Psalm 37

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

Stewards of the manifold grace

Our prayer meetings are the context in which the Holy Spirit strengthens us by the seven Spirits of God to pray and minister according to the will of God. We come together after we have travailed through the course of the week in our houses and prepared our hearts in the secret place. Our time together may move to prophetic words, gifts of the Spirit, the expression of worship in song, or other manifestations of ministry initiative, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The effectiveness of our Sunday morning 'body ministry time' is implicitly linked to our application to an effective intercessory prayer meeting. Upon the foundation of our individual prayer and travail throughout the week, we can arrive on Sundays in faith, knowing that there will be grace in the midst of the congregation. Grace is ministered as gifts, and will be shed as light, power, discernment and wisdom. By this means, sons of God receive the word of present truth as life.

The apostle Peter described our body ministry saying, 'As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.' We function as members of Christ during our body ministry time, having come to the throne of grace and joined the travail of Christ. This is not the expression of our personal sonship. We are speaking the very utterances of God Himself. He has answered our prayer, given us grace to minister life to others, and strengthened us to function by the Spirit of God.

References:

1Co 3:10 Eph 3:8
1Co 15:10 Eph 4:11
2Co 6:1 Rom 12:6-8

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

1 Peter 4

Proverbs 12

The unspiritual person

The unspiritual person will appraise life according to their own cognition and emotion. This approach to life is what the Scripture calls 'in the flesh'. The Bible clearly states that 'those who are in the flesh cannot please God'. The unspiritual person cannot perceive the hand of God in the events transpiring around them. Their world view and outlook on life is entirely governed by their own sensory perceptions. The apostle John said concerning a 'sensory approach' to life, 'This is not from the Father, it is from the world'. He defined all that is in the world as the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life'. We can define 'lust' as 'misappropriated desire'. The apostle John concluded his teaching on a sensory approach to life by saying, 'The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever'.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote concerning the tribulation of the days ahead. He said, 'The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purpose of His heart; in the last days you will understand this'. A spiritual person will understand the signs of the times and they will set their heart on things which are eternal. However, an unspiritual person will have no capacity to understand the times and seasons of God. In the last days, those who follow after their own lusts will become mockers who say, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' They will believe that all things continue as they have from the beginning of creation. The unspiritual person will be preoccupied with the things of the world and their security and success in this world. It will escape their notice that this present heavens and earth is reserved for judgement by fire. The earth and all its works will be burned up.

References:

Gal 2:20
1Jn 2:16-18
Jer 30:24

2Pe 2:3-4
1Pe 4:1-2

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Prayer with fasting

Prayer *with fasting* should have a central role in the life of a committed Christian. We are reminded of the testimony of Daniel who said, 'I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications *with fasting*, sackcloth and ashes'. There are many different kinds of fasting which are identified in the Scripture. These range from 'absolute fasts' when no food or drink is consumed, to the kind of fast undertaken by Daniel when he abstained from all tasty food, meat and wine. In all cases, the purpose of fasting is the 'affliction of the soul' so that our complete and total preoccupation is waiting on the Lord. King David testified that he 'humbled his soul with fasting'. When we fast, we recognise that our life is not sustained by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. But more than this, we recognise that we have no capacity to apprehend the will of God according to our own wisdom, strength, and sensory perceptions.

Most significantly, the Lord commanded the Old Testament believers to 'afflict their souls' on the Day of Atonement. They were not to eat or drink on this day. It became known as 'the fast' throughout the generations that followed. For us today, whenever we fast, we do so in the faith of the Day of Atonement. We recall that Jesus, our great High Priest, has entered the most holy place and sat down in the mercy seat. For this reason, the work of the Day of Atonement has been made continual for the church. We are called to humble our souls by fasting, as we wait for Christ to return a second time without reference to sin. We fast in the faith that 'He who began a good work' in us 'will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ'.

References:

Dan 9:3 Lev 16:29
Psa 35:13 Act 27:9
Php 1:6 Heb 9:28

Further Study:

Esther 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 16

The sequence of prayer

We recall the words of Paul, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God'. This verse is helpful in identifying a sequence of prayer. Certainly, prayer does not begin with a list of requests. Likewise, Paul's letter to Timothy supports the concept of a sequence of prayer. He urged Timothy to pray with supplication and worship, then intercession, and then with thanksgiving for all men.

We will suggest that the first aspect of prayer is to wait patiently for the Lord in a spirit of worship. Secondly, the Holy Spirit begins leading our prayer with 'groanings too deep for words' in a spirit of supplication. Thirdly, we join the intercession of Jesus Christ and we begin to make petition before God. The Greek word for 'petition' is derived from another Greek word that means to 'bind oneself to'. We are able to make petition once we have joined the fellowship of prayer with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Further to this, as we petition the Lord on behalf of one another, we are being joined with the eternal bonds of the Spirit. In this regard, we may be joined in the Spirit to many people who we have never met before. This is the miracle of intercessory prayer. Paul urged the Romans to 'strive together with me in your prayers to God for me'. Paul had not met these faithful believers but they had been joined with him in the fellowship of prayer.

The fourth element of prayer is making our requests known. It is noteworthy that we only begin asking God for His specific enabling in our life when the secret of our name has been revealed through prayer in the Spirit. The final type of prayer is thanksgiving. When we are praying with thanksgiving, we are expressing our gratitude to God for answered prayer.

References:

Rom 15:30 Jas 5:16
Php 4:6 Rom 6:17
1Ti 2:1 2Th 1:3

Further Study:

Genesis 18

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 17

Worship

It is interesting to consider that the first type of prayer which the Scripture identifies is 'worship'. In many cases, the Greek word which is translated 'prayer' could equally be translated 'worship'. The first facet of our prayer is the 'raising of our hands' as the morning and evening sacrifice of worship. Worship is our attribution of worth to God. It is the expression of our desire to draw near and join the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul said to the Ephesians, 'With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints'. This could otherwise be translated 'with all worship and supplication'. These aspects of praying in the Spirit precede the work of persevering in intercessory prayer for all the saints.

When we begin praying with a heart to worship God, we pray in other tongues, quieten our spirit, edify ourselves, and wait on God. The first practical point of understanding, concerning effective prayer, is that we must wait on God. The testimony of our prayer life must begin with, 'I waited patiently for the Lord'. We wait in order to set aside everything we are thinking and feeling. The Gospels account that Jesus would rise early in the morning while it was still dark, leave the house He was staying in, and go to a secluded place to pray. The word 'pray' in this account, once again, denotes 'worship'. Jesus was not preoccupied with the physical location. Rather, He was seeking to be alone so that He could wait on God. Similarly, king David testified, 'In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch'.

References:

Psa 141:2 Mar 1:35
Eph 6:18 Psa 5:3
Psa 40:1 Heb 5:7

Further Study: Daniel 9

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 18

Supplication and petition

The second type of prayer which the Scripture identifies is supplication. We can consider worshipful prayer and supplication as the mode by which we draw near to the most holy place. Supplication moves beyond worship and begins entreating the Holy Spirit to burden us with the mind of Christ. We are waiting 'on the Lord' and 'for the Lord'. In the sequence of prayer, supplication does not yet carry any specific petitions or requests. While we pray with supplication, the Holy Spirit moves upon us with a burden of prayer. He is leading us to the fellowship of prayer so that we can join the travail and intercession of Jesus Christ. We will begin to have a specific sense of burden according to the will of God. This could be a burden for individuals, offerings, projects, ministry initiatives, families, congregations, regions and nations.

Once the nature of this burden becomes clear to us, it brings us to the third type of prayer which is petition. This is the activity of making intercession and beseeching God according to His word. We have clarity concerning His testimony because it has been illuminated in our hearts. We are praying for His will to be done. The ultimate purpose of prayer is to join the intercession of Jesus Christ. We know that He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. The Greek word for 'intercession' means to 'confer with' or to 'meet with for the purpose of conversation'. It is an exciting truth that when we join the intercession of Jesus Christ, we enter into the dialogue of Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning Their covenant purpose. He has added incense to our prayer and there is a functional interaction between our prayer and Christ. God is truly hearing us, and we find peace in the knowledge that He will answer our prayer according to His will and timing.

References:

Heb 4:16 Heb 13:15
Heb 7:25 1Sa 12:19
Joh 17:24 1Ki 13:6

Further Study:

Numbers 21

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

Requests and thanksgiving

The fourth type of prayer relates to our specific requests. The apostle Paul encouraged us to let our requests be made known to God. This is on the condition that we have firstly prayed with an attitude of worship and waited on God with supplication. He was making the point that the fruit of worshipful prayer and supplication is that we learn the mind of Christ and join the deep fellowship of His intercession. In this way, we understand the will of God for our life and recognise that He 'knows what we need before we ask Him'. At times, we will struggle to understand the various crises we experience in our walk with the Lord. These seemingly irresolvable elements of life can always be resolved by prayer. We may not find an answer for every question, but abiding in the secret place under the shadow of the Most High will bring us to peace. We will know the peace of God that surpasses understanding. God may not give us any words that we can speak to articulate the confirmation of His will, but He gives us perfect peace.

This will cause us to offer up 'thanksgivings'. The Greek word for 'thanksgivings' means the gratitude we express having found favour. On one hand, this is the culmination of our sequence of prayer. On the other hand, this will also mark the beginning point for prayer. This is because we have returned to the Lord to offer up worship and, once again, seek the fellowship of prayer. Paul described our recurring commitment to pray, saying, 'As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with thanksgiving'.

References:

Php 4:6-7 Psa 38:9
Mat 6:8 Luk 12:30
Col 2:6-7

Further Study: John 16

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 22

Obtaining testimony through prayer

Jesus Christ is our great High Priest and He has taken His seat in the most holy place of the true tabernacle. The hope of our sonship is found in Him. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul said, 'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil'. The outcome of laying hold of this hope of sonship is that we possess a testimony. Our testimony is the substance of our sonship. It defines who we are as a son of God within the camp of the saints. The Greek word literally means the 'witness', 'record' or 'evidence given' that substantiates who we are as a son of God.

We need to draw near to the throne of grace, through prayer, to apprehend the word of our testimony. We read in the book of Exodus, 'You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you'. Our testimony as a son of God is found in the Everlasting Covenant between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we draw near to God through prayer, we are included in the fellowship of this covenant. Our name and the works of our sonship are revealed to us.

Jesus described the testimony that He received as 'the works' the Father gave Him to accomplish. He said, 'The testimony which I receive is not from man'. Jesus proclaimed to the Jews, 'The very works that I do testify about Me; that the Father has sent Me'. Having drawn near to the ark of testimony by prayer, we proceed out of the sanctuary to accomplish the works of our name. These works reveal the testimony of our sonship before all men.

References:

Exo 25:21 Heb 11:4-5
Joh 5:34, 36 Joh 4:39
Heb 6:19

Further Study: Hebrews 12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 23

Overcoming Satan

In the book of Revelation, we read how Satan is overcome by the messengers of Christ and the church. The Scripture accounts, 'They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death'. As a direct consequence of this, Michael and his angels will cast Satan from the heavenly places. It is the ministry of offering within the church which destroys the power of Satan. When we receive grace to participate in the fellowship of offering within the church, we are joining the fellowship of the administration which will ultimately cast Satan out of heaven and judge the world.

The words of John concerning the overcoming of Satan are prefaced by a description of the perfected church. Earlier in the same chapter, the church is depicted as a woman, the bride of Christ, 'in labour and in pain to give birth'. The labour of the woman is not a poetic description. It describes the unique labour and travail of offering and prayer which will be experienced by the perfected church in that day. In our day, we likewise travail in prayer so that the will of God will be accomplished in the earth and in our lives.

If we are committed to laying down our lives for one another, rather than preserving our lives at all costs, then Satan will have no advantage in us. We will have a testimony like Christ Himself who said, 'The ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me'. We know that Satan, the ruler of this world, has been judged by the offering of Christ. He will be cast out of heaven in the time of the end and judged along with the world. We overcome him in our lives when we join the fellowship of offering and the fellowship of prayer within the church.

References:

Joh 14:30-31 Rom 16:20
Joh 5:36 2Co 10:3-5
Joh 16:33 Heb 2:14-15

Further Study: Revelations 12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 24

Mercy and kindness

The apostle Paul encourages us to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. In a colloquial sense, we would most commonly think of 'mercy' as the withholding of a penalty that was deemed to be right and proper. From a scriptural perspective, this understanding of 'mercy' describes God's pity and compassion towards us. This is relevant for the unbeliever who is dead in their trespasses and sins and living in the land of forgetfulness.

Or, it could be relevant for the Christian who is missing the mark and erring in their walk with the Lord. In all but two cases, the Greek words that are translated 'mercy' mean 'compassion'. This is the first exercise of God's mercy. It is the unmerited kindness of God whereby He does not invoke the punishment of our sin upon us. Mercy, in this case, is His forbearance.

However, when we consider the mercy seat, it is important to understand the significance of entering behind the veil. The book of Romans informs us that God has displayed Jesus Christ publicly as our 'mercy seat'. The mercy that we find in the most holy place is much more than the kindness of God. The original language of the Scripture describes the activity of the mercy seat as the work of 'propitiation'. God's mercy is, firstly, His compassion for our situation; but more importantly, it is His power which enables us to change our situation. He is enabling us with the power of God, by blood and water, to effect change in our lives. He is helping us apprehend everything hidden in the ark of the covenant until 'we all attain to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ'.

References:

Heb 4:16 Rom 3:25
Eph 2:1 Eph 4:13
Psa 88:12 1Jn 4:10

Further Study:

1 John 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25

The mercy of God in the camp

We know that a person is not able to confidently and boldly enter the true tabernacle of God if they are unclean. For this reason, the mercy of God has established a process of cleansing. This process begins outside the camp with the waters of purification. We recall the words of Paul, 'I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God'. The pity and compassion of God enables a person to be washed, sanctified, and justified so that they can present their body as a living sacrifice at the altar.

We have previously considered that the aroma of our sonship needs to ascend before we receive incense and the capacity to enter behind the veil. Upon the foundation of joining the offering of Christ at the altar, we draw near to the throne of grace in the third heaven as we pray in the Spirit and join the intercession of Christ. The Father, through Christ, answers our intercessory prayer by giving us mercy and grace to help in time of need. It is our goal as Christians to live by the faith of the mercy seat, not simply the pity of God.

When we pray and partake of the elements of the communion, we remain thankful for His compassion and kindness towards us. Nevertheless, our desire is to remain in the sanctuary where His power is bringing us forth as gold. King David testified, 'I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living'. The kindness of God revives us from the grave, the land of forgetfulness. The mercy of God becomes our portion and capacity to remain in the land of the living, the camp of the saints, forevermore.

References:

Num 19:19 Psa 27:13
Rom 12:1 Psa 88:11-12
Job 23:10 Job 19:26-27

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 26