

Prayer and the tabernacle

The understanding of prayer for many Christians is built on the doctrines of the Reformers. It is based on theologies that do not believe in the reality of a true temple or tabernacle. As a result, for many believers, prayer has become little more than a list of requests. When He does not meet them, they lose heart and say, 'God does not hear my prayer'. Jesus dispelled this approach to prayer when He said, 'Your Father knows what you need *before* you ask Him'. Prayer, at the first level, is never a list of requests. We draw near to God by praying in the Spirit to hear and to listen, not to offer the 'sacrifice of fools'. The apostle James warned us that if we ask and do not receive, it is because we are asking with the wrong motives.

The book of Hebrews informs us that we have a great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is a minister in the sanctuary of the true tabernacle. The true temple is the 'temple of His body'. We are mindful that the book of Hebrews was written to help the Jews understand the application of the Old Testament law, once it had been fulfilled by Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The purpose of prayer only finds substance when we consider the true tabernacle. The Scripture instructs us to run for refuge behind the veil. This is where we lay hold of the hope set before us. The most holy place is where our hope as an anchor for our soul, our name, our works, mercy and grace are found. And like the priests of old, we cannot enter the most holy place without the incense of prayer. King David implored the Lord, 'May my prayer be counted as incense before You'. The incense of prayer represents our authority to proceed from the altar to the mercy seat in the most holy place.

References:

Mat 6:8 Ecc 5:1
Jas 4:3 Joh 2:21
Heb 9:11-12 Heb 6:18
Lev 16:13 Psa 141:2

Further Study: Hebrews 8

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 4

A house of prayer

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, 'The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him ... even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.' In the days ahead, a great multitude will travel on the 'highway of holiness' to Mount Zion. This is the sanctuary of God, the most holy place. Prayer will become the most important activity for Christians who have come into the house of God. For many years, we have been considering the imperative of an offering model. Offering is the mode of the kingdom of God. We cannot proceed into the most holy place, without first presenting ourselves at the altar. But our hope as Christians is not to remain at the altar. We must draw near to God in the most holy place by the incense of prayer.

Jesus Christ, having entered into the presence of God, 'always lives to make intercession' for us. He is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places. He is praying for every person named in the Lamb's book of life, according to the will and timing of God. The purpose of our prayer and refuge in the most holy place is to join this fellowship of prayer. This is why Jesus entered the temple of Herod and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and said, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a robber's den'. When we align our prayer to the intercession of Christ, we join His work to see a multitude of unbelievers find the highway of holiness.

References:

Isa 56:6-7 Isa 2:2
Heb 7:25 Eph 1:20
Isa 53:12 Isa 59:16

Further Study:

Mark 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

The Day of Atonement

We read in the book of Hebrews that Christ will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly wait for Him. This refers to the fulfilment of the Day of Atonement. We recall that when the high priest returned from the most holy place, it signified that the process of attaining judicial perfection was complete. Jesus' offering at Calvary fulfilled the sacrificial requirements of the Day of Atonement. 'But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.' The significance of Jesus sitting down in the most holy place is that Christians must live in the ongoing faith of the Day of Atonement. This is the hope of attaining to the 'perfections of Christ' as sons of God and members of the body of Christ, the church. The Day of Atonement will not be complete until Jesus appears a second time in His temple, to those who are waiting for Him in prayer. In this faith, King David testified that he waited patiently for the Lord.

The book of Revelation shows us that on the Day of Atonement, the church, depicted as 'the woman', will be revealed in the glory of the Ark of the Covenant. And she will be in labour and in pain ready to give birth. The woman, the church, will firstly come into the most holy place *by* the travail of prayer. Secondly, she will join the intercession of Christ and begin travailing to bring forth. We are reminded of the words of the apostle Paul to the Galatians, 'My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you'. When we join the intercession of Christ, we fellowship in His labour of prayer to see every son of God standing perfect and complete in the will of God.

References:

Heb 9:28 Lev 16:23-24
Heb 10:12 Rev 11:19
Rev 12:1 Gal 4:19
Col 4:12

Further Study:

Psalm 40

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

Drawing near to Him

The glorious promise of the Scripture is that Jesus Christ is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him. We are encouraged to 'draw near with confidence to the throne of grace' because that is where Christ is seated. The book of Hebrews further instructs us to 'draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'. If we have uncleanness in our life, such as immorality, anxiety, anger or dissent, we cannot enter the most holy place. Our priestly robe is unclean and we have no authority to appear before God. In this situation we must firstly deal with our uncleanness. If a Christian lacks confidence to pray, or is afraid to pray, this may be the indication they do not have a clear conscience before God. One who is not washed does not possess a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

Many Christians have a testimony regarding their forgiveness. The gospel of sonship was proclaimed, they were convicted concerning their sinful life, and they responded by confessing a belief in God. This process describes the outcome of a messenger of Christ preaching the word and establishing a clean place among 'the wilderness of the peoples'. But this is not the meaning of drawing near to God through Christ. Jesus Christ is *not* able to save forever, the believer who remains in a clean place outside the camp. We must draw near to God to find our name and work in the Ark of Testimony. If we refuse to do this, we are like those who draw back from the Lord, of whom the Lord says, 'My soul has no pleasure in him'. Our prayer is heard when it ascends in the intercession of Christ, in the most holy place.

References:

Heb 7:25

Rom 8:34

Heb 4:16

Heb 10:22, 38

Num 19:9

Further Study: 2 Chronicles 7

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 7

In the Spirit

The apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesian believers to ‘pray at all times in the Spirit’. We draw near to the Ark of the Covenant by praying in the Spirit. This is the meaning of Paul’s words, ‘The Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how we should pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings too deep for words’. When we pray in other tongues, led by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the mind of Christ and the will of God. Without the Spirit, our prayer will be according to ‘all that is in the world’. This will be the desires of our flesh, the longing derived from what our eyes perceive in the world, and our self-confidence in the plans of our own heart. None of these are from the Father. However, when the Spirit joins us to the mind of Christ and His intercession, our prayer ascends as incense.

When we pray in the Spirit, we draw near to Christ who is in the third heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. Our prayer, ascending as incense, takes us to heavenly places in Christ. We recall the apostle John testified, ‘I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day’. We know, physically, John was on the island of Patmos. As he continued to travail in the Spirit, the Lord said to him, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place...’ John was invited into heavenly places by prayer. He wrote, ‘I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne’. We do not need a purpose or goal when we pray. Instead, we draw near to pray in other tongues and wait. As we do, the Spirit helps our weakness, aligns our prayer to the will of God, and convicts us concerning what we should pray for.

References:

Eph 6:18 Rom 8:26
Heb 7:25 1Jn 2:16
Rev 1:10 Rev 4:1-2

Further Study:

Psalm 141

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

The secret place

The psalmist wrote, 'The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant'. The secret of the Lord is the name of every foreknown son included in the Everlasting Covenant of sonship. We discover our name at the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place. The secret of the Lord is found in the secret place of prayer. Our hope, our refuge and the anchor of our soul are within the veil. Jesus instructed His disciples saying, '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'. The open reward of the Father is His promise to manifest the knowledge of our name when we draw near to Him. He equips us with grace to fulfil our name. And He hides us under the shadow of His wings when we seek Him in times of trouble. King David wrote, 'He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me'.

Jesus also instructed the disciples saying, 'When you give ... let your giving be in secret'. That does not mean our approach to offering is done in isolation or without consultation. Rather, He is saying that we prove our name found in the secret place, by offering. We come out from the secret place to give alms and to offer according to our name. We are then known in the midst of the assembly by our fruit. As we order our lives this way, we hear our name in the Spirit. The final statement concerning the secret of the Lord is the promise that we can learn and fulfil our predestined name by persevering in offering. The Lord said, 'To him who overcomes ... I will give him a new name which no one knows but he who receives it'.

References:

Psa 25:14 Mat 6:4,6
Psa 57:1 Rev 2:17
Rth 2:12 Luk 13:34

Further Study:

Psalm 27

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

He lives to make intercession

The offering of Jesus Christ has finished the work of sprinkling blood. He has been raised to the third heaven where His ministry is now the work of intercession. He is interceding at the right hand of the Father to recover the names of every foreknown son of God that were lost in Adam. Christ has sat down in the mercy seat where every name written in the Lamb's book of life is hidden within the Ark of the Covenant. At the first level, He writes the names of those who are dead to God in the hearts of His messengers. When they go forth and proclaim the names of those who are lost, Jesus Christ is actively making intercession before the Father. The purpose of His prayer is to align believers to the will of God concerning their name, priesthood, and works. His intercessory prayer aligns us to the secret of the Lord. The prophet Isaiah wrote concerning Jesus, 'He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and *interceded for the transgressors*'. Without Christ proclaiming our name before the Father, we are unable to recover our sonship. It is a fearful thought that if we turn our back on the Lord and depart from Him, He ceases to make intercession for us.

At the second level, the intercession of Christ is the context for our prayer to be heard by the Father. Isaiah saw prophetically and was 'astonished that there was no one to intercede'. In the days of His flesh, Jesus Christ offered up prayers to the One able to save Him from death and *He was heard*. As He travailed in prayer, the incense of His life was ascending and covering the mercy seat. By His intercession, we can boldly approach the throne of grace in His priesthood. When we pray, we are not firstly making requests; we are entering into the deep fellowship of the intercession of Jesus Christ.

References:

Isa 53:12 Rom 8:27, 34
Isa 59:16 Heb 4:14-15
Heb 5:7 1Jn 2:1-2

Further Study:

John 16

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

Not without incense

The new and living way into the most holy place has been opened by the blood of Jesus, through the 'veil of His flesh'. However, it is important to note that our entry within the veil is firstly by the incense of prayer. In the tabernacle of Moses, the high priest was instructed to take his firepan, with coals of fire from the altar, and finely ground incense whenever he went inside the veil. We read, 'He shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, *otherwise he will die*'. As the *Shekinah* glory of God descended upon the mercy seat, the ascending cloud of incense covered the mercy seat. Our prayer ascending as incense is the means by which we can touch the throne of grace and not die. It is by the priestly work of incense that we receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. Without incense, we cannot touch the glory within the veil, the glory of our sonship.

Ascending incense is implicitly linked to the intercession of Christ. We participate in the intercession of Christ when we travail in prayer. The Lord meets us at the altar and leads us through the trial of faith. This is the crushing process through which the spices of the incense, which are representative of the Spirit of Christ in us, are released. Fire, which is representative of the activity of the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies us to our name, is added to the spices of our life. We can then confidently draw near to God, knowing that as we pray and travail in the Spirit, our prayer is ascending as incense before the throne of grace.

References:

Heb 10:20 Lev 16:12-13
 Heb 9:24 Psa 141:2
 Jer 18:15 Mal 1:11
 Luk 1:9-11 Rev 8:3-4

Further Study:

Exodus 30

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The spices and salt

We read in the book of Revelation about the angel standing at the altar, holding a golden censer, and being given much incense. With this symbolic picture in mind, we can understand the words of Jesus concerning the Father who is in secret. He said, 'When you give, your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you'. When we present offering at the altar, the provision of much incense is the reward of the Father. We are to present ourselves at the altar, the place of meeting, and take coals of fire to mix with incense. The Lord said to Moses regarding the nature of incense, 'Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure frankincense ... with it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure and holy'. The four spices represent the Spirit of Christ. They are the four aspects of His administration; kingship, priesthood, fatherhood/sonship and prophetic ministry. We read in the book of Isaiah that it pleased the Father to crush Jesus Christ. The sufferings of Christ equalled the crushing process that produced the aroma of His life. When we fellowship in His sufferings, we are the aroma of Christ to God. As we travail in prayer, by the power of Eternal Spirit, we join the intercession of the Son.

The mixing of salt with the spices, symbolises the fiery trial of faith that we encounter as we fellowship in the crushing, afflicting process. We are 'salted with fire' because salt is the preserving work of the Holy Spirit to sustain us in the travail of prayer. If we draw back when the fiery trial touches our life, we are avoiding the crushing work of the perfumer. We will be unable to sustain a prayer life. There will be no aroma of incense ascending and we will not be able to enter the holy place of the sanctuary.

References:

Rev 8:3 Lev 16:12-13
 Mat 6:3-4 Php 1:19
 Isa 53:10 Exo 30:34-35
 Mar 9:49 Exo 30:7-8

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Mark 9

Proverbs 14

Morning and evening

King David testified, 'Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice'. David had confidence that the Lord would hear his prayer because he understood the morning and evening sacrifice. This was the continual burnt offering, the morning and evening lamb, offered by fire as a soothing aroma to the Lord. Today, it is the expression of our whole life given to the Lord so that we are accepted. The aroma of the morning sacrifice would continue to ascend throughout the day until the evening sacrifice was offered, and then its aroma would ascend throughout the night. Practically, we must order our personal programs so the 'fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out'. This will mean we are drawing aside to pray morning and evening in the faith that the aroma of our life ascends to God at all times. When we do this, the provision of the Spirit of Christ, representative of incense, is given to us.

When we assemble together for communion on Sundays, we are partaking at the altar. The bread and wine are the elements of the New Covenant, and the apostle Paul reminds us that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. However, this provision is only applicable when we extend the Passover Lamb to become the morning and evening sacrifice, by prayer, throughout the week. Both the aroma of our life as an offering, and the aroma of incense are ascending as we draw near to the throne of grace. Hence King David implored the Lord, 'May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering'. When we have a structured routine for praying in the Spirit, the aroma of our offering and incense ascends throughout the course of the day.

References:

Psa 55:17 Exo 29:39-42
Psa 141:21 1Co 5:7
Heb 13:10 Zep 3:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Numbers 28

Proverbs 15

Traditions learned by rote

For many Christians, there are aspects of their faith, such as prayer, that become habitual behaviour. The danger for any group of Christians is that they cease drawing near in the Spirit, and instead adopt formula or ritual systems. One such example would be a feeling of uneasiness or the need to 'fill the silence' when there is a period of silence in a corporate prayer meeting. Once a congregation adopts a liturgical approach toward their prayer together, they will lose their capacity to go to the secret place. Jesus taught, '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'. Similarly, the prophet Isaiah rebuked the people of God saying, 'This people draw near with their words and honour Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote'. 'By rote' refers to something habitually and mechanically repeated, without genuine understanding of its meaning.

We need to join the intercession of Christ so that our travail in prayer connects other people to their name, according to the will and covenant of God. If we do not pray in the Spirit, we cannot make requests according to the will of God. The apostle James encourages us that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. We recall the account of Noah building an altar to the Lord and offering burnt offerings after the flood waters had subsided. The Scripture accounts that the Lord smelled the soothing aroma and responded to Noah. We observe that Noah 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; *Noah walked with God*' because he waited on God in this way.

References:

Mat 6:7
1Co 11:33
Gen 8:20-21
Col 2:20-23

Jas 5:16
Isa 29:13
Gen 6:9

Further Study:

Mark 7

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

Anxious prayer

The most common tradition learned by rote in the prayer life of many Christians, is to pray out of anxiety. King Solomon wrote, 'Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down'. We cannot draw near to God based on anxiety, as if our anxious thoughts are the substance of prayer. The apostle Paul was very clear, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God'. Paul was highlighting that anxiety should have no impact on our prayer. This may be a considerable challenge for many Christians. God does not hear our anxious prayer. Instead, He smells the aroma of our offering, the aroma of incense, the aroma of the anointing oil of Christ upon us and the aroma of the intercession of Christ. Anxiety indicates a lack of trust in the Lord and, therefore, our life will not be wholly given to Him at the altar of burnt offering.

Like King David, we must take courage and implore 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'. By this means, our 'prayers will not be hindered'. The stumbling block for many Christians is that as they present their bodies as a living sacrifice, the Lord immediately connects them to the fiery trial. This is the fiery trial that crushes and afflicts us so that the aroma of our sonship ascends and we have the authority to enter the most holy place. God wants us to proceed from the altar to the place of intercession, the mercy seat. And He wants us to move from the trial, to travail and prayer in the Spirit; not from the trial to anxiety. The fruit of praying at all times in the Spirit is that the Holy Spirit anoints us with peace in the midst of the fiery trial.

References:

Pro 12:25 Php 4:6
 Psa 139:23-24 1Pe 3:7
 Rom 8:26 Eph 6:18
 1Co 14:14-15

Further Study:

1 Samuel 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

The cares of the world

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'We have received, *not the spirit of the world*, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God'. These words warn us that the spirit of the world erodes our capacity to pray according to the will of God. The spirit of the world entices us to control our environment and determine our own outcomes, rather than waiting on God in prayer. When our prayer has been overtaken by the cares of the world and anxiety, we will endeavour to resolve our dilemmas 'by reason of thought'. Jesus said, 'Who of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life?' The cares of the world choke our capacity to hear and apply the word of God. Our Christian life will become unfruitful. The apostle Peter reminds us that we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, in order to pray in the mind of Christ. As we do this, we cast all our cares upon the Lord.

God will not answer our requests if our prayer is motivated by the cares of the world. We cannot compel God to action by anxious prayer. The apostle James answered 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.' It is natural for us to be double-minded regularly. We will have two thoughts in our mind and uncertainty concerning how to proceed. When we are double-minded, we do not firstly ask the Lord for an answer. James wrote, 'That man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord'. Instead, we pray in the Spirit and find faith in the will of God, before we let our requests be made known to Him.

References:

1Co 2:12 Mat 6:27
Mat 13:22 IPe 5:6-7
Jas 4:2-3 Jas 1:6-8

Further Study:

Luke 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

We do not know how to pray

The first lesson every Christian must learn about prayer is their need to come to Jesus and simply say, 'Lord, teach me to pray'. This is what His disciples did. The apostle Paul confirmed this when he wrote, 'We do not know how to pray as we should'. He described our incapacity to pray as our weakness. We are reminded of Jesus' words to Peter, James and John as they sought to pray with Him in the garden of Gethsemane. He said, 'The spirit is willing, but *the flesh is weak*'.

Paul continued, 'The Spirit helps our weakness; the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to help us. He enables us to pray according to the will of God and persevere in prayer. For this reason, it is imperative that Christians are baptised in the Holy Spirit and possess the freedom of other tongues. As we pray in other tongues, we are waiting on God. The Holy Spirit is praying through us and Jesus Christ begins to make intercession for us. Paul said concerning Christ, 'He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints *according to the will of God*'. The Father hears our prayer in the Spirit and the prayer of Christ as it ascends as incense before Him.

The Greek word that is translated 'pray' equally means 'worship'. Our prayer in the first case is not petitions, intercession or requests. It is coming before God to worship and to wait. It is joining the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer. Once we have joined the fellowship of prayer so that the mind of the Spirit is being made known to us, we can then begin to intercede and make petition for ourselves and the saints according to the will of God.

References:

Luk 11:1 Rom 8:26-27
Mat 26:41 Mat 6:25
Jas 4:3 Mat 20:22

Further Study:

Luke 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Sequence of prayer

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 and pray. He did not do this for the sake of the location, but rather, to be alone and wait on God. Similarly, King David testified, 'In the morning I will order my prayer to You and *eagerly watch*'. The first proposition of drawing aside to pray is waiting and praying in other tongues. 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. When we are led by the Spirit, 'He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think'. We recall the words of Paul, '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 don't come together to satisfy our own needs or express our own burdens. We come together to wait on the Lord and then minister to one another.

The second proposition of prayer is supplication. Our supplication entreats the Holy Spirit to begin burdening us with the mind of Christ. He leads us to the fellowship and travail of prayer in the intercession of Christ. We will begin to have a sense of burden, according to the will of God, for individuals, offerings, projects, ministry initiatives, families, congregations, regions and nations. The third proposition of prayer is petition or intercession. When we petition God, we are beseeching Him according to His word. We have clarity concerning His testimony because it has been illuminated in our hearts. We pray for His will to be done. The fourth proposition of prayer is making our requests known. We only begin asking God for His enabling in our life when the secret of our name has been revealed through prayer in the Spirit.

References:

Mar 1:35 Psa 5:3
Psa 40:1 Eph 3:20
1Co 11:34 Luk 6:12
Heb 5:7 Psa 27:13-14

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Psalm 55

Proverbs 22

Afflicting our souls with fasting

For the unspiritual person, there is no other way of approaching life except by cognition and emotion. This is what the Scripture calls 'in the flesh'. And 'those who are in the flesh cannot please God'. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul reminds us that the priests of the Old Testament were weak through their flesh. Accordingly, 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, which became known as 'the fast' throughout the generations that followed. Afflicting our soul, or 'humbling our soul' as other translations say, means to put aside our predisposed thinking and emotions. When we pray with fasting, it will clear our heads from all our attitudes to do with life, and allow us to let go of our preconceptions concerning how God *should* meet us.

Today, the commitment of a Christian toward fasting should be expressed as their participation in the faith of the Day of Atonement. Fasting should have an implicit role in the life of a committed Christian. 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. Both the apostle James and the apostle Peter reminded us that God is opposed to the proud, *but gives grace to the humble*. Those who pray in the flesh are motivated by their own attitudes and conclusions concerning life and the world around them. They will not draw near to the throne of grace and receive mercy and grace to help in time of need, because they are proud. Alternatively, those who humble their souls by prayer with fasting will receive grace upon grace.

References:

Rom 8:3, 8 Heb 9:28
Act 27:9 Jas 4:6
Lev 16:29 1Pe 5:5
Heb 4:16

Further Study: Daniel 9

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

Finding capacity through prayer

The book of Hebrews informs us that Jesus Christ *offered* Himself 'through Eternal Spirit'. This is the fullness of the Spirit of God, the capacity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus received this strengthening through His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. We recall that He prayed to the Father saying, 'Not My will be done, but let Yours be done'. It was on account of this prayer that an angel of heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. Jesus Christ received capacity for His priesthood through the travail of prayer in the garden. He received the capacity to offer His body a living sacrifice and, therefore, establish the elements of the New Covenant. Today, our capacity to participate in the communion, namely the elements of worship and body ministry, is enabled by the travail of prayer. As we join Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, which is the holy place, we receive the power of Eternal Spirit to priest our bodies as a living sacrifice.

The Scripture records that Peter, James and John were found 'sleeping for sorrow' in the garden of Gethsemane. They were overwhelmed because they could not understand why the 'Lamb of God' needed to suffer and die. The Lord exhorted them to wake up and pray, because peace is found in the secret place of prayer. When we struggle to understand and experience various crises, the seemingly irresolvable elements of life can 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 brings us to peace. Rather than sleeping for sorrow, the Scripture calls us to, 'Wake up and strengthen the things that remain'. We are strengthened by Eternal Spirit to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father by the travail of prayer.

References:

Heb 9:14 Luk 22:42-43
Mat 26:40 Luk 22:45
1Pe 3:18 Rev 3:2
Rev 1:6

Further Study: Isaiah 49

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 26

The judgement of prayer

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray He said, 'Do not resist an evil person ... love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'. Similarly, the apostle Paul quoted the book of Proverbs saying, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will *heap burning coals on his head*'. 'Heaping burning coals' represents the judgement of prayer. When Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, He was strengthened to offer Himself as the 'just for the unjust'. In the same way, He has instructed us to pray when we suffer at the hands of godless men. We pray for those who insult us, deceive us, rob us of opportunity and deal treacherously with us. In all of these things, we must continue offering and priesting in the sanctuary so that the aroma of our sonship ascends as incense. When we pray for our enemies and remain joined to the intercession of Jesus Christ, we intercede for those who are harming us.

There are two principle outcomes when we pray this way. Firstly, our hearts are filled with peace that surpasses understanding. We are strengthened to endure the circumstances that befall us and we are enabled to recognise and receive them as our participation in the sufferings of Christ. Secondly, the intercession of Jesus Christ that is at work in our prayer becomes judgement upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. God will repay with affliction those who afflict us. The apostle Paul said, 'Jesus Christ will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels *in flaming fire*'. He was referring to the final incense of the Scripture when, at the opening of the seventh seal, the angel in the book of Revelation takes the censer together with the prayers of the saints, fills it with the fire of the altar and throws it to the earth.

References:

Rom 12:20 Luk 10:33-36
Pro 25:21-22 2Th 1:6-9
Rev 8:3-5

Further Study:

Matthew 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Strange fire

In the Old Testament, the high priest was instructed to take his censer, or firepan, full of coals of fire from the altar, add the incense of mixed spices and salt, and enter inside the veil. They were accepted before God on account of the aroma ascending from their censer. We recall in the book of Numbers that ‘Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered *strange fire* before the Lord’. On account of this ‘strange fire’, the Scripture accounts that ‘fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them’. The ‘strange fire’ they offered, resulted from incense that was not mixed according to the Lord’s instruction. For believers today, the offering of strange fire represents any presumption to draw near to God while living in disobedience. If our prayer is not joined to the intercession of Jesus Christ, we are not praying according to the will of God. We cannot minister in the sanctuary. We cannot pray for initiatives that are outside our predestined priesthood, and expect God to receive or honour them.

We read in the book of Ezekiel, ‘Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here ... seventy elders of the house of Israel, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. They say, “The Lord does not see us”.’ The seventy elders were praying in an unclean state because the Lord saw their idols as an abomination. The incense ascending from their censers represented their life of disobedience to the will of God. They incurred the judgement of their own prayer. Ezekiel prophetically saw the glory of God depart from the temple and a man, clothed in linen, filled his hands with *coals of fire* and scattered them over the city.

References:

Lev 16:12 Lev 10:1-2
 Mat 7:23 Psa 140:12-13
 Eze 10:2 1Ki 11:6-10

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Ezekiel 8

Proverbs 28

The prayer meeting

Our weekly prayer meetings are unlike any other gatherings in our church program. When we assemble together at other times we sing, rejoice, clap our hands and make a loud noise before the Lord. This is what it means to enter His gates with thanksgiving and praise. However, in the symbolism of the Scripture, the goal of our prayer meetings is not to minister at the altar, at the doorway of the sanctuary. Instead, we should already be clothed with fine linen and seated with Him in heavenly places, having entered the most holy place. When we assemble together to pray, we are drawing near to wait *quietly* before the Lord, seeking to join the deep fellowship of His intercession. In contrast to this, we are reminded of the account of the golden calf, when the nation of Israel needed to wait patiently for Moses. The book of Exodus says, ‘When Moses came down from the hill he said, “What has happened?”’ Aaron had let the people get out of control! Rather than waiting quietly for the word of the Lord, the people had sat down to eat and drink, and then risen up to play.

We need to travail throughout the course of the week in our own secret place of 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 give us clarity so that our prayer is according to the will of God and we can minister to others. The Holy Spirit is actively strengthening us so we can pray in the Spirit without ceasing, while we wait for conviction concerning the specific mind of Christ for that meeting. Then, we join the fellowship of prayer and pray by course so that the testimony of the mind of Christ is confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

References:

Exo 32:25 Exo 32:6
Eph 2:6 Lev 10:3
1Th 5:17 Mat 18:16

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 29