

What Jesus Prayed for You Specifically

If there is a sin that is prevalent in the church today, it's prayerlessness. So often we miss out on what God wants to do because we don't pray.

As Christians, we don't want to break God's commandments, which would be committing sins of commission. But we also can be guilty of the sin of omission, which is not doing what we should.

We need to pray with each other, and we need to pray for each other. We can pray anywhere. Paul prayed in a dungeon. Daniel prayed in a cave filled with hungry lions. Peter prayed on the surface of the water, and then he prayed underwater. Jonah prayed from the belly of a great fish. The main thing is that we pray. God doesn't care so much about the length of your prayer or the eloquence of your prayer; He cares about the heart of your prayer.

God looks on the heart more than anything else, really. Jesus said, "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8). If that is the case, then why pray? The answer is pretty simple. Prayer is not informing God; prayer is inviting God. When I call out to the Lord in prayer and offer my petition, I'm not informing God of something he doesn't already know. Rather, I'm inviting God into my situation, into my challenges, into my problems.

The value of prayer is that it keeps me in touch with God. When people ask me to pray for them, I always try to do it immediately so that I don't forget. When Christians are facing a crisis and ask other Christians to remember them in prayer, that is a good thing to do. Jesus said, "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it

will be done for them by My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). There is no question about it: there is power in unified prayer.

Even when we forget to pray, we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus Christ is in Heaven, interceding for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, because He at all times lives to make intercession for them." And Romans 8:34 says, "It is Christ who died, yes, who is risen, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, a 19th-century Scottish minister, said, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me!" That is so true.

The question is ,what does Jesus pray when He intercedes for us? We find the answer revealed in John's Gospel, chapter 17. This is a prayer that only Jesus could pray, so it gives us an insight into His desire for us. It shows us His heart. Jesus prayed a lot, by the way. He was God walking among us, yet He always was praying to the Father.

Before Jesus chose the 12 apostles, He prayed all night (see Luke 6:12). We see him praying in the garden of Gethsemane as He contemplated the horrors of the cross, saying, "'O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done'" (Matt. 26:42b).

We also see Him praying from the cross. In fact, His first words from Calvary were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34b). And His last words from the cross also formed a prayer: "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46b).

Jesus was always praying. If Jesus, being God, felt the necessity to pray, then how much more should we pray? With all of our flaws, with all of our shortcomings, with all of our

weaknesses, how much more should we follow the example Jesus set for us?

Jesus could have prayed this particular prayer in John 17 privately. But He wanted His disciples to hear this prayer, so He prayed it out loud. First, Jesus prayed for Himself. He told the Father that His work on earth was finished (verses 1–5). Second, He prayed for His disciples. He prayed that the Father would keep them and sanctify them (verses 6–19). Then he closed by praying for all believers—the church that would come (verses 20–26).

This brings us back to the why of prayer. Why should we pray? Because God will allow circumstances in our lives to keep us dependent on Him. If you never had a problem again, if you never had an unpaid bill, if you or your family never had a single sickness, if you never had a single conflict, a single problem, if you knew the answer to every question, if you always knew the right decision to make, would you still pray?

God will allow these things in our lives to keep us dependent on Him. We call out to Him because we need His help. That's why God doesn't give us all of his glorious gifts in one lump sum. He wants to hear from us. And he wants to answer our prayers. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

But God also says, in effect, "Yes, I'll bless you. I'll provide for you. But I want you to come to me. I want fellowship with you. I want time with you." That is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Our Father in heaven loves to lavish blessings on us. It's His joy. But we must come to Him.

God will do his part. But if we're yanking our hand out of His hand, that is a problem. God is holding on to you, but are you holding on to God?

In John 17, Jesus prayed for our preservation. He wants us safe in him. He also prayed for our consecration, that we would be sanctified and set apart to Him. And He prayed that we would be unified and love one another.

Our country is divided right now along racial, political and socioeconomic lines. But we can have unity as followers of Jesus Christ. We may not agree on everything, but we can love one another. That is what Jesus was praying. He was praying that we would do just that. {eoa}

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