

## Lesson 4

### Qualifications for the Effective Prayer Warrior

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Bible tells us repeatedly that the Christian is involved in a spiritual battle. There is an invisible war in the realm of the supernatural taking place all about the Christian.
- B. To be an effective prayer warrior in the midst of the spiritual war, one must know how to pray, what to pray for, and what hinders prayers from being answered. Dwight L. Moody said,

I would sooner know how to pray aright than to own all the gold in Alaska. I would rather have power to move the arm that moves the world than to wear the crown of any earthly king.

- C. Praying effectively makes Christians strong spiritually and a bulwark against the forces of evil. Prayer makes Christians invincible. Mary Queen of Scots, the Roman Catholic who opposed the Protestants in Scotland, said that she was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox than of any army of ten thousand men. When Stonewall Jackson prayed, some of his soldiers said, "There is going to be thunder in the Yankee's camp tonight! Ol' Jackson is on his knees."
- D. Learning to pray aright involves knowing what God expects as qualifications for those who approach Him in prayer. Positive answers to prayer are conditioned on any number of things.

#### II. PERSONAL CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

- A. A Man Right before God (James 5:16b): Being righteous before God will answer one's prayer refers primarily to positional righteousness that one receives because of faith in Christ Jesus. God answers the prayers of those who have been clothed in the positional righteousness of Christ. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). However, the word "righteous" probably also refers to practical righteousness that one has when he is in temporal fellowship with Jesus Christ. There must be a general desire to please God before prayers will be answered.
- B. A Man in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20): This definitely refers to temporal fellowship in that a Christian is submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit. True prayer is prayer in the Spirit; that is, the prayer the Spirit inspires and directs. Submission to the Spirit prompts, motivates, and guides one in his prayer life. NOTE: Sometimes we do not feel like praying. Should we then stop praying until we feel like it? No! We should tell God how cold and prayerless our hearts are, and look up to Him and trust Him to fill us with the Spirit and grant us a desire to pray. POINT: It is said of the late D. L. Moody that while praying one day, the glory of God so filled his soul to overflowing that he had to cry out, "Hold back, Lord, I can't hold any more!" But also there were many times he had

to reckon on faith without any feelings that God was with him. The issue is not how we feel, but whether we are in the Spirit when praying.

### III. POSITIVE CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

- A. The Christian Must Pray According to God's Will (1 John 5:14-15): A sovereign God has a perfect plan that will come to pass and which brings the most glory to Himself. God is sovereign at all times, and our prayers, in order to be effective, must be in accordance with His sovereign will for us. If what we ask of the Father is not what He intended us to have from the foundation of the world, He will not give it to us. This is why we must pray "in the Spirit" so our prayers will be energized by God and be according to His will.

Spiros Zodhiates says,

Your prayers and mine, then, your petitions and mine, to obtain results, to be effective, must be energized by God Himself. Let us not be disappointed when we do not receive the things for which we ask. It is not because God is deaf and cannot hear, not that He is indifferent, but simply because what we ask is not what He has intended for us. And since it is impossible for us to enter into the very secret thoughts and desires of God for our own individual lives, even concerning their minutest details, we cannot help but ask amiss many times. But let us accept divine energy upon our petitions. He knows best, and what He does for us is good, not necessarily for our temporal being, but for our eternal personalities. (*What the Original Greek Text Says About Prayer*)

- B. The Christian Must Be Abiding in Christ and His Word (John 15:7): The Christian is to be in fellowship with his Lord and reveling in His Word before there will be effective prayer. One cannot pray according to God's will until he knows what God's will is, and God's will is found primarily in the Bible. NOTE: There are many who would like to have answers to prayer but they are not willing to sacrifice time to know God's Word.
- C. The Christian Must Be Obedient to the Word (1 John 3:22): The believer who chooses to be obedient to God will most certainly see God bless him in his prayer life. Answers to prayer will come in direct proportion to the willingness the Christian has to do God's will.
- D. The Christian Must Ask in Faith (James 1:5-7): One must believe that God can and does answer prayer. Faith is going beyond the natural to the supernatural. Faith is simply trusting in God's faithfulness.
- E. POINTS TO PONDER
1. The Christian is to come as a child to the Father and ask, not demand, things.
  2. The Christian has a right to ask for anything, but that does not mean that he will get it.
  3. If the Christian is abiding in the Father and obeying Him, then the Holy Spirit will prompt the believer to pray according to God's perfect will.

### IV. HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER

- A. Cherished Sin in the Life (Isa. 59:1-2; Psa. 66:18): Sin, which is rebellion to God, breaks temporal fellowship with the Father. Until a Christian sees his sin, admits to it, confesses it, and seeks to forsake it, he will never have an effective prayer life. Sin is an awful thing, and one of the most awful things about it is the way it hinders prayer. Anyone who would have power in prayer must be merciless in dealing with his own sins! The Christian must be constantly searching his own heart for personal sin and for impure motives. Psalm 139:23-24 says,

*“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,*

*And lead me in the everlasting way.”*

- B. Selfishness (James 4:3): So often we ask for things in prayer when our motives are putrid. The human heart is very deceitful but God answers the prayer of an honest man. For instance, why should a woman desire the conversion of her husband? First of all and above all, that God may be glorified; because she cannot bear the thought that God the Father should be dishonored by her husband trampling under foot the Son of God. Evans hits home on these motives of man in *Why Pray?*

When you pray ask, Why do I wish to excel in this thing? Is it because I wish to be known as great, to possess personal power, to minister to self? Or is it to scatter good among others, to be useful and helpful in the world? Why ask for more temporal prosperity, or spiritual power? Is it to hold or is it for use? Why ask for a fine voice, for fine address in the pulpit, for power in preaching? Is it for self-aggrandizement or for God's glory and the salvation of others? Why do you pray for a higher salary? Is it for higher living, or that you may extend your benevolence?

- C. Ill Will or Hatred Towards Another (Mark 11:24-26): To harbor ill will and carry around a grudge towards another person hinders effective prayer. Our personal relationships with men must be right before we can have an intimate relationship in prayer with the Father. Hatred of any nature destroys the human soul. Booker T. Washington once said, “I will not let any man reduce my soul to the level of hatred.”
- D. Stinginess Towards the Poor (Proverbs 21:13): Those to whom God has given much in the way of material blessing are to share it with those who have been given very little. There is perhaps no greater hindrance to prayer than stinginess, the lack of liberality toward the poor and toward God's work.
- E. Poor Marital Relationship (1 Pet. 3:7): Husbands and wives have biblical responsibilities to one another, for they are joint heirs of the grace of life. Torrey comments in *How to Pray*,

Many a man who makes great pretensions to piety, and is very active in Christian work, shows but little consideration in his treatment of his wife, and is oftentimes unkind if not brutal; then he wonders why it is that his prayers are not answered. The verse that we have just quoted explains the seeming mystery. On the other hand, many a woman who is very devoted to the church, and very faithful in attendance upon all services, treats her husband with the most unpardonable neglect, is cross and peevish toward him, wounds him by the sharpness of her speech, and by her ungovernable temper; then wonders why it is that she has no power in prayer.

- F. Idolatry (Ezek. 14:3): An idol is anything that takes the place of God, anything that is the supreme object of our affection. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

## V. CONCLUSION

- A. Every Christian has many times cried out as the Psalmist, "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" or "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through."
- B. But unanswered prayers should not deter us from the use of prayer. It should, on the contrary, drive us to our knees to discover, if possible, the reason why our prayers are denied. God longs to answer the prayers of His children when these prayers are asked according to His sovereign will.