

Three Key Prayers

Understand these three essential areas of prayer, and you will pray more effectively for yourself and others.

Jesus' disciples asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1) The evidence of the Gospel accounts would suggest that they were not only asking for a method; they might well have been saying: "Lord, show us why prayer is essential for our lives, as it seems to be for Yours."

From both the example and the teaching of Jesus, we know that the Christian life does not consist of doing things--not working at Christian tasks--but of a relationship with Himself. This relationship is built through prayer.

The Bible gives many examples of how prayer is involved in this personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Three specific scriptures may serve as examples.

1) The Prayer of Salvation (Matt. 14:30)

In Matthew 14:22-31, Peter had asked to be empowered to walk on the water, and had heard the Master say "Come." But Peter was suddenly gripped with fear, as he saw how precarious his position seemed. And he began to sink.

It was then that Peter cried out the prayer we all must utter, "Lord, save me!" It was a prayer of helplessness, a recognition that he was sinking and had no power to save himself.

Two truths emerge from this incident:

- Jesus is the One Who calms fears
- When we ask for help, Jesus is the One Who says, "Come..." And He responds then when we cry out to be saved.

2) The Prayer of Surrender (Acts 9:6)

On the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus--chief persecutor of the Christians--was gloriously converted and became Paul, the anointed Apostle to the Gentiles. When he heard the voice of his Lord, and recognized Who had spoken to him, he had only one possible response--as we do:

"Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6 NKJV)

When Saul became Paul, he yielded his life completely to the will and work of Jesus Christ. He surrendered, and never again would be disobedient to his Master. That was the work of God's transforming grace in the life of one man--and an example of the transformation that God seeks in the life of everyone He saves.

Ask it for yourself right now: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

3) The Prayer of Sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)

Here is the way to know, and to do, the will of God. Paul understood it, and he presents it as a plea to every follower of Christ: "...offer your bodies as living sacrifices...be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

Isn't this the deepest desire in the heart of every child of God? To know and do His will, through the transformation of our minds by the power of His Spirit? To lay our very lives on His altar and become acceptable to Him? It is not only possible; it is essential, and it comes as we daily pray that prayer of sacrifice:

"Lord, accept the offering of my body as a living sacrifice; it is my spiritual act of worship. Transform me, by the renewing of my mind, so that I may know and do your will. Through the sacrifice of Your Son I come, and in His name I pray. Amen."