

# **The Privilege of Prayer**

*By Cynthia Lisa Audain*



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## Introduction:

In 1Thessalonians 5:17, the Bible tells us that we must 'pray without ceasing'. But first we must understand what prayer is before we can follow what the Bible says. The understanding of what prayer is and how often we practice it in our daily lives truly determines our success or failure in spiritual things.

Reflect with me for a moment. When you give obeisance to God, does this ritual that accompanies prayer, produces a monotony of shallow words or do you pour out your cares, show gratitude to God and acknowledgment your insufficiencies and helplessness before the throne of God? Do you practice talking with God every moment? And while talking with God, do you take the time to listen? Do you feel your need or lack, enough to petition God for its fulfillment?

Those are the contemplations that should fill your mind as you begin to go through the booklet.

This short study has been borne from personal conflicts and anxious moments of wanting to understand God's plan. At times, I am not fully aware through His providential workings, why things happen the way that they do. But it is at those moments patience must be exercised and faith is borne to allow one to trust God.

My dear readers, it is in those moments that I have learnt what it means to trust and live with God. When no one is around or no one you could pour your heart out to, those are especially the times that you should look up. There is a God who is merciful, kind, long suffering and knowest all the desires of the heart and he knows what is needed, for you and me to experience true happiness in this sinful world. In obedience, listen to that small still voice that often whispers, 'pray to God and trust His heart'.

It is true that there are many things that we do not understand. But know this that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord (Rom 8:28). One may not always understand God's plan but it is important to always trust God's heart.

Today I have made the understanding gained about prayer, into a simple bible study with the hope that we will feel the deep need to talk with God more often. That we may understand the privilege that we so very often underestimate and the blessings that are produce through prayer.

Let us learn how to talk with God by listening to Him.

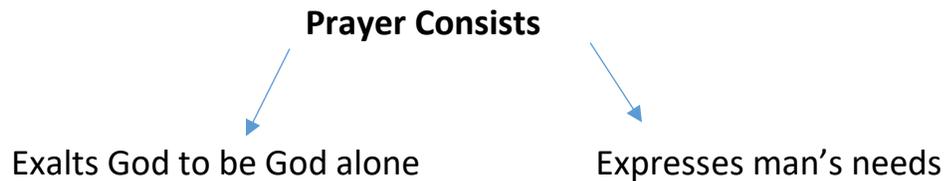
# The Privilege of Prayer

1. So what really is prayer? Prayer is a communication between us and the living God. (Phil 4:6; Ps 39:12; Dan 9:17; Matt 21:22; Rom 10:1).

Ellen White puts it this way:

*“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend... it is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse.”* E. G White, **Steps to Christ**, pg. 93, 95.

2. A true prayer to God must consist of two parts.
  - a. It must exalt God to be God alone. So it must be God-ward. (Zech 8:22; Matt 6:6; Jonah 4:2; Matt 26:39).
  - b. It must relate to man’s needs (Mk 11:24; Mk 13:33; Luke 21:36)



3. We of ourselves do not know how to pray or even what to pray for. That is why the Disciples in a simple request from God asked God ‘to teach them how to pray’ (Luke 11:1). And it is the Spirit of God that utters to us what we should pray for. Romans 8:26 tell us the following:

*“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

4. Christ gave us an example of how to pray. This our Father prayer, as it is often called, was not given to us a transcript for us to **repeat as** a prayer, but as pattern on the **structure of** our prayer. We must therefore address God, as the true God in heaven, who could forgive our sins and provide all our needs. (Matt 6:7, 9-13; Luke 11:1-4).

I quote:

*“The world's Redeemer frequently went away alone to pray. On one occasion His disciples were not so far away but that they could hear His words. They were deeply impressed by His prayer, for it was charged with vital power that reached their hearts. It was very unlike the prayers which they themselves had offered, and unlike any prayers which they had heard from human lips. After Jesus had joined them again, they said to Him: “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”...*

*“Jesus has given to us a prayer in which every expression is full of meaning, to be studied and brought into practical life.... It is a prayer that expresses the essential subjects that we need to present to our heavenly Father....*

*In the Lord's Prayer, solidity, strength, and earnestness are united with meekness and reverence. It is an expression of the divine character of its Author....*

*The model prayer of Christ is in marked contrast to the prayers of the heathen. In all false religions, ceremonies and forms have been substituted for genuine piety and for practical godliness....” **The Review and Herald**, May 28, 1895.*

*“There are two kinds of prayer—the prayer of form and the prayer of faith. The repetition of set, customary phrases when the heart feels no need of God, is formal prayer.... We should be extremely careful in all our prayers to speak the wants of the heart and to say only what we mean. All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire. The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetitions if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the*

*prayer of faith. The publican who went up to the temple to pray is a good example of a sincere, devoted worshipper. He felt that he was a sinner, and his great need led to an outburst of passionate desire, "God be merciful to me a sinner.*

*"To commune with God we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten. But He who wrought wonderfully for His servants of old will listen to the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word....*

*After we have offered our petitions, we are to answer them ourselves as far as possible, and not wait for God to do for us what we can do for ourselves.... Divine help is to be combined with human effort, aspiration, and energy.... We cannot be borne up by the prayers of others when we ourselves neglect to pray, for God has made no such provision for us. Not even divine power can lift one soul to heaven that is unwilling to put forth efforts in his own behalf...." **Signs of the Times**, August 14, 1884.*

5. So God wants us to speak to, and with Him, telling Him all our needs for He alone can supply them. The model prayer is unlike any prayer that is spoken in false religions. We must have prevailing prayer in our lives (Matt 7:7-11; Rom 8:32; Phil 4:19; Jn 15:7, 16; Jn 16:23, 24).

I quote:

*"In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6.*

*God has made it our duty to pray. The riches of the universe belong to Him. He has all temporal and spiritual treasures at His command and can supply every want from His abundant fullness. We receive our breath from Him; every temporal blessing that we enjoy is His gift. We are dependent upon Him not only for temporal blessings but for grace and strength to keep us from falling under the power of temptation. We daily need the Bread of Life to give us spiritual strength and vigor, just as much as we need food to*

*sustain our physical strength and give us firm muscles. We are compassed with weakness and infirmities, doubts and temptations; but we can come to Jesus in our need, and He will not turn us away empty. We must accustom ourselves to seek divine guidance through prayer; we must learn to trust in Him from whom our help cometh....*

*We must have a deep, earnest sense of our needs. We must feel our weakness and our dependence upon God, and come to Him with contrition of soul and brokenness of heart. Our petitions must be offered in perfect submission; every desire must be brought into harmony with the will of God, and His will must be done in us....*

*If we walk in the light as Christ is in the light, we may come to the throne of grace with holy boldness. We may present the promises of God in living faith and urge our petitions. Although we are weak and erring and unworthy, "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."... When we have offered our petition once, we must not then abandon it, but say, as did Jacob when he wrestled all night with the angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and like him we shall prevail....*

*It is only by watching unto prayer, and the exercise of living faith, that Christians can preserve integrity in the midst of the temptations that Satan brings to bear upon them.... Talk to your heart constantly the language of faith: "Jesus said He would receive me, and I believe His word. I will praise Him; I will glorify His name." Satan will be close by your side to suggest that you do not feel any joy. Answer him, "I have everything to be glad of, for I am a child of God. I am trusting in Jesus." —**Signs of the Times**, May 15, 1884.*

6. Our prayer or praying must be ceaseless and fervent before God. Paul tell us to 'pray with ceasing' (1Thes 5:17; Eph 6:18) and an 'effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man prevailing much' (James 5:6).

We do have examples of many of God's people in times past who exercised the privilege of prayer in their daily lives. Elijah and Luther, apart from Christ, Himself, as an example, had this experience where they had to pray continuously before God.

I quote:

*“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:17, 18.*

*Important lessons are presented to us in the experience of Elijah. When upon Mount Carmel he offered the prayer for rain, his faith was tested, but he persevered in making known his request unto God. Six times he prayed earnestly, and yet there was no sign that his petition was granted, but with strong faith he urged his plea to the throne of grace. Had he given up in discouragement at the sixth time, his prayer would not have been answered.... We have a God whose ear is not closed to our petitions; and if we prove His word, He will honor our faith. He wants us to have all our interests interwoven with His interests, and then He can safely bless us; for we shall not then take glory to self when the blessing is ours, but shall render all the praise to God.*

*God does not always answer our prayers the first time we call upon Him; for should He do this, we might take it for granted that we had a right to all the blessings and favors He bestowed upon us. Instead of searching our hearts to see if any evil was entertained by us, any sin indulged, we would become careless, and fail to realize our dependence upon Him, and our need of His help.” **The Review and Herald**, June 9, 1891.*

*[Martin] Luther was a man of prayer. He worked and prayed as though something must be done.... His prayers were followed up by venturing something on the promises of God; and through divine aid, he was enabled to shake the vast power of Rome, so that in every country the foundations of the church trembled.*

*The Spirit of God cooperates with the humble worker that abides in Christ and communes with Him.” **The Review and Herald**, April 22, 1884.*

*“Prayer has been made the means of obtaining blessings that would not otherwise be received. The patriarchs were men of prayer, and God did great things for them. When Jacob left his father's house for a strange land,*

*he prayed in humble contrition, and in the night season the Lord answered him through vision. He saw a ladder, bright and shining, its base resting on earth, and its topmost round reaching to the highest heaven.... Afterward, while on his return to his father's house, he wrestled with the Son of God all night, even till break of day, and prevailed. The assurance was given him, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men."*

*Joseph prayed, and he was preserved from sin amid influences that were calculated to lead him away from God. When tempted to leave the path of purity and uprightness, he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

*Moses, who was much in prayer, was known as the meekest man on the face of the earth. For his meekness and humility he was honored of God, and he discharged with fidelity the high, noble, and sacred responsibilities intrusted to him. While leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, again and again it seemed that they must be exterminated on account of their murmuring and rebellion. But Moses went to the true Source of power; he laid the case before the Lord....*

*Daniel was a man of prayer, and God gave him wisdom and firmness to resist every influence that conspired to draw him into the snare of intemperance. Even in his youth he was a moral giant in the strength of the Mighty One....*

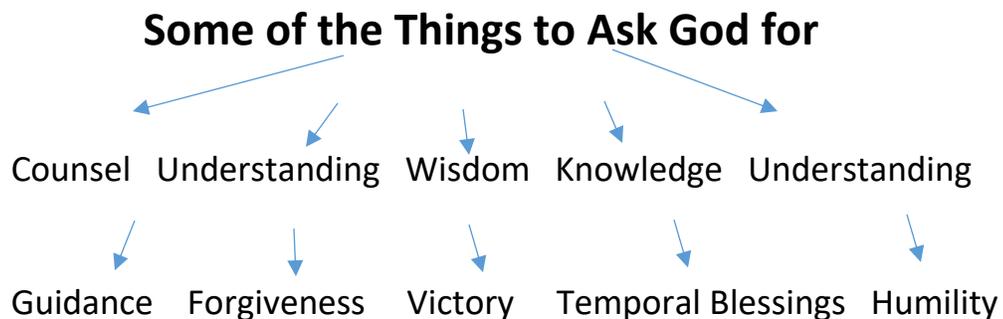
*In the prison at Philippi, while suffering from the cruel stripes they had received, their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise to God, and angels were sent from heaven to deliver them. The earth shook under the tread of these heavenly messengers, and the prison doors flew open, setting the prisoners free.... We should be continually loosening our hold upon earth, and fastening it upon heaven."—**Signs of the Times**, August 14, 1884.*

7. So what are some of the things we should ask God for:
  - a. For counsel and understanding of all things that may puzzle us (Dan 2:17-19; Jud 18:5; Acts 1:6; Jos 9:14; Jud 1:1).

- b. For a revelation of God’s way for guidance; humility (Ps 25:4, 5; Jer 6:16; Luk 6:12).
- c. Temporal blessings for the purpose of glorifying Him (1Sam 1:20; 11Kgs 2:9, 10; Ps 2:8; Zech 10:1).
- d. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding (1Kg 3:5-13; James 1:5; 11Ch 1:7-11).
- e. Help against your enemies (2Ch 20:1, 4).
- f. Renewal of the heart and cleansing from sin (Ps 51:10,2)

I quote:

*“Pray.... when you are desponding, close the lips firmly to others; keep all the darkness within, lest you shadow the path of another, but tell it to Jesus. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith, that you may see light in His light and rejoice in His love. Only believe, and you shall surely see the salvation of God.”* **The Review and Herald**, April 22, 1884



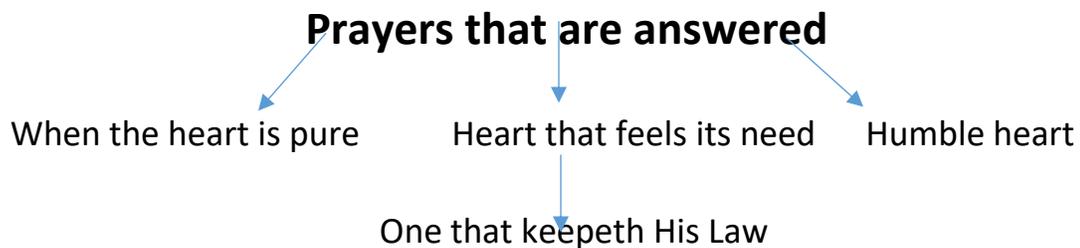
8. Since prayer is a communication with God. There is a true way to pray to God that causes Him to hear, answer and speak to us. And there is a false way which is an abomination to him. So God listens to a prayer that cometh from:

- a. A heart that is pure and cometh not from feign lips (Matt 23:14; Ps 17:1; Matt 6:5-8; Job 16:17).
- b. God answers the pray of the heart and feels its needs. His heart is humble and upright (Ps 86:1; Pro 15:8; Luke 18:10-14; Isa 38:5).

I quote:

*“Elijah humbled himself until he was in a condition where he would not take the glory to himself. This is the condition upon which the Lord hears prayer; for then we shall give the praise to Him...”* **The Review and Herald**, June 9, 1891.

- c. Heart that is righteous before Him that keepeth His Law (Pro 15:29; Pro 28:9; Jam 5:16; 1Pet 3:12).



I quote:

*“When we do not receive the very things we asked for, at the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears and that He will answer our prayers. We are so erring and short-sighted that we sometimes ask for things that would not be a blessing to us, and our heavenly Father in love answers our prayers by giving us that which will be for our highest good—that which we ourselves would desire if with vision divinely enlightened we could see all things as they really are. When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most. But to claim*

*that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire, is presumption. God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Then do not fear to trust Him, even though you do not see the immediate answer to your prayers. Rely upon His sure promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you." **ibid**, pg. 96.*

9. Our prayer should be continual before God. Formally done at least three times per day (Dan 6:5,10; Col 4:2; Ps 72:15; Acts 6:4; Acts 12:5; Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18; 1Tim 5:5).

I quote:

*"The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer.... Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation." **ibid** pg. 95*

10. There are benefits that are given to us when we have ceaseless pray before God:

- a. Growth in faith and in experience with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jer 33:2, 3; Luke 11:13).
- b. Gives peace (Phil 4:6, 7; Ps 55:22; Isa 26:3).
- c. Gives humility, thus combating pride in us (Isa 6:1-5; 11Chr 7:14).
- d. Fresh supply of strength for help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16).
- e. Help us to gain the victory over sin and our enemies (Luke 22:40; Neh 6:9-16).

- f. Faith is strengthened in trials (2Cor 1:3, 4; Luke 22:41-43).
- g. We are given ways to be of service others; thus discernment (James 5:16).



I quote:

*“To the consecrated worker there is wonderful consolation in the knowledge that even Christ during His life on earth sought His Father daily for fresh supplies of needed grace; and from this communion with God He went forth to strengthen and bless others. Behold the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father! Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gathers to Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men.”*

*“The disciples of Christ had a deep sense of their own inefficiency, and with humiliation and prayer they joined their weakness to His strength, their ignorance to His wisdom, their unworthiness to His righteousness, their poverty to His exhaustless wealth. Thus strengthened and equipped, they hesitated not to press forward in the service of the Master.”* E. G White, **Acts of the Apostles**, pg. 51, 57

*“He who teaches the word must himself live in conscious, hourly communion with God through prayer and a study of His word, for here is the source of strength. Communion with God will impart to the minister's efforts a power greater than the influence of his preaching. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived. With an earnestness that cannot be denied, he must plead with God to strengthen and fortify him for duty and trial, and to touch his lips with living fire.”* **Ibid**, pg. 362

*“Prayer to the Great Physician for the healing of the soul brings the blessing of God. Prayer unites us one to another and to God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side and gives new strength and fresh grace to the fainting, perplexed soul. By prayer the sick have been encouraged to believe that God will look with compassion upon them. A ray of light penetrates to the hopeless soul and becomes a savor of life unto life. Prayer has “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire”—we shall know what this means when we hear the reports of the martyrs who died for their faith—“turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”*

*Prayer went before and sanctified every act of His ministry. He communed with His Father till the close of His life; and when He hung upon the cross, there arose from His lips the bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Then in a voice which has reached to the very ends of the earth, He exclaimed, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”... The night seasons of prayer which the Savior spent in the mountain or in the desert were essential to prepare Him for the trials He must meet in the days to follow....*

*All things are possible to those that believe. No one coming to the Lord in sincerity of heart will be disappointed. How wonderful it is that we can pray effectually, that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God! ... We utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe.”—**The Review and Herald**, October 30, 1900.*

## **Conclusion:**

God reveals His will to us through His providential workings, through nature, His word and through prayer.

Thus since prayer is a communication between you and God and communication involves not only talking but listening; God also talks back to us. Therefore, there is also a need for us to listen to Him while we pray. Praying often will allow God to talk with us often and our hearts will be comforted, knowing that there is nothing good that He will not withhold from those who loves Him.

I quote:

*“Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children, and yet there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants to God. What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God’s heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith? The angels love to bow before God; they love to be near Him. They regard communion with God as their highest joy; and yet the children of earth, who need so much the help that God only can give, seem satisfied to walk without the light of His Spirit, the companionship of His presence.” **ibid**, 94, 95*

May we talk with God more, listening to His small still voice in our lives, for hope, comfort and victory over sins.

AMEN