

IN YOUR CLOSET

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

I Thessalonians 5: 16-18, ESV

May, 2021

PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

Perhaps we had better begin with a disclaimer. Prayer is the outpouring of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. So, when we consider principles, we in no way mean to think in terms of requirements, for prayer is not something we do; prayer is a loving gift from our Father, a privilege He lovingly provides for us as His redeemed children. Prayer is possible through the grace and mercy of our loving Lord. Prayer is personalized through the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, who continuously shapes and molds us as we are sanctified for God's perfect purpose, in both our creation and in our re-creation.

PRAYER IS A PRIVILEGE

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4: 14-16

So, it seems clear that prayer is a privilege, a bountiful blessing from our loving Father and our blessed Savior. We have access to a High Priest who knows our weakness, One who has been tempted in every way that we are, One who faced the same challenges we face, and still without sin. He invites us to come to Him because He understands our failings and because He, Himself, is the strength to overcome those failings. He is, indeed, our advocate before God, because He who has redeemed us, understands us; He knows and mends and molds our ways. Surely it is our Enemy and our sinful pride that make us hesitate to pray often and with joy in our hearts. A child who is hurting, who has a loving mother, will not hesitate to hurry to her side. Neither should we waste time when we want to talk with our Heavenly Father. I recall these words of Martha J. Stevens:

And Jesus said, "Come to the water,
stand by My side,
I know you are thirsty, you won't be
denied;
I felt ev'ry teardrop when in darkness you
cried,
And I strove to remind you that for those
tears I died."

Prayer IS a privilege. How sad it is when we look at prayer as some unpleasant duty. We should rejoice when we come to pray. Notice 1

Thessalonians 5: 16-18 above: First, “Rejoice always, . . .” Then, “. . . pray without ceasing, . . .” Next, “. . . give thanks in all circumstances, . . .”

We have this privilege
as rich and as rare
as a rose red and perfect
placed in our hands . . .

And so we rejoice,
pray without ceasing,
along with our
grateful thanksgiving.

God is not shaking His finger at us with a scowl on His face, demanding to know why we are not praying. Rather, He’s smiling through tears, asking us tenderly in love, “Where have you been? Why haven’t you prayed? What is so important, you keep ignoring my love?”

PRAYER IS PRECIOUS

*For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the Lord,
plans for welfare and not for evil,
to give you a future and a hope.
Then you will call upon me
and come and pray to me,
and I will hear you.*

Jeremiah 29: 11-12

God has certainly proven His perfect Love for us in the life and death of His Son and our Savior, Jesus. This is His precious guarantee to us—if we call on Him He will heal us. This is a gift so precious we cannot waste it with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. “Oh, yeah, I pray when I get in trouble or when I lose my way.” What a waste of a precious gift. It is as if God offers a bright red rose

every morning, and we ignore it, except in times of emergency.

Every morning without fail
I find a red rose on my
table so lovely I can tell
it is God’s gift from heaven . . .

And yet I ignore His loving
gift and leave it lying as
if it we were not precious,
colored by His very blood.

PRAYER IS POWERFUL

Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything by
prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests
be made known to God.
And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4: 6-7

Prayer is more powerful than we will ever know this side of Heaven. Then all of us will look back and see how God acted redemptively and constantly in response to the prayers of His children. Then we will continue to praise Him forever.

How many red roses
has He planted
in all our gardens
too long ungathered?

