

Second Requirement for Approaching God: Faith



How to Pray and Get What You Pray For (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today, as we continue with our theme for the week, "How to Pray and Get What You Pray For."

In my two previous talks this week, I've explained that God wants us to pray and get what we pray for, but there are requirements we have to fulfill as we approach God in prayer. Yesterday, I dealt with the first requirement: to renounce our own will and embrace God's will. In this, Jesus is our example. His prayers were heard because of His reverent submission. This was expressed by His saying to the Father, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

I summed this up: Prayer is not a way for you to get God to do what you want. Prayer is a way for you to become an instrument for God to do what He wants. And what God wants is always exceeding abundantly beyond, or immeasurably more than, anything that we could ask or think. When you're praying on the level of God's will, you're praying on the highest possible level. Far higher than you could ever achieve by simply asserting your own will.

Today I'm going to deal with the second requirement for approaching God in prayer. It can be stated very simply in one word: faith.

In Hebrews 11:6, we are reminded that there is one basic unvarying requirement for all who would approach to God. This is what the verse says:

> "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (NIV)

Notice that without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is essential if we are to be accepted by God. Anyone who comes to God must believe, that's an unvarying requirement of God. Furthermore, we are required to believe two things: that God exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Now most of us do not have a serious problem

about believing that God exists. If that were all that we were required to believe, we would meet the condition, but it is not all. We are required to believe not merely that God exists, but that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Do you believe that? That's really the vital question. You may say, "Well, I don't know much about doctrine or theology or creeds. I'm not too clever in any of those things." Well, I have good news for you. Faith of this kind is not primarily concerned with doctrine or theology. It's a confidence or a trust in God as a person. It's a trust in God's character, His reliability. You come to God believing that if you earnestly seek Him, He will reward you. That's really not much of theology. That's your own personal picture of God. That's why at the beginning of this series of talks I said it is so important that we start with the right picture of God. That's what generates faith. We believe in God's goodness. We believe in His faithfulness. We believe in His reliability.

And that's why on the other side unbelief is sinful, which the Bible clearly states it is. Some people don't see why unbelief is sin, but one basic reason is that unbelief casts aspersions on God's character. It makes a picture of God which is false and unattractive.

Now this requirement that we approach God in faith is universal for any way of approaching God, but it is applied particularly to prayer. For instance in Matthew 21:22, Jesus says:

> "And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (NAS)

That's the key word there in the middle: "Believing." Everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. And then again in 1 John 5:14, we read this:

> "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us..." (KJV)

That's what I'm talking about just now. It's confidence in God. It's not essential believing right doctrine, or being able to repeat a creed, or a statement of fundamentals, but it's confidence in God Himself as a Person, confidence in His goodness, confidence in His character. If we come to God with that confidence, then whatever we ask we know He hears us.

So start with that approach of complete trust and confidence in God and try to be like a little child coming to its parent, being convinced that its parent loves it and whatever it asks, the parent will do for it. That's the basis of approaching God in faith. Get away from the thought of theology. It's not theology. It's a personal relationship to God that we're speaking about just now.

How then can we acquire this kind of faith that I'm talking about? The faith that approaches God with confidence? Thank God that the New Testament not merely tells us that we have to approach God with faith, but it also tells us in a very practical way how faith comes. We find this in Romans 10:17. Make a note of that verse. It's one of the key verses. That's the verse that got me out of hospital when the doctors couldn't heal me. I really owe my health and my long life and my strength to Romans 10:17.

> "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (NAS)

I was lying there in the hospital realizing that if I had faith God would heal me, and every time I was thinking that way, the next thing I'd say to myself was, "I don't have faith." And then one day the Holy Spirit directed me to Romans 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing..." And the words that I laid hold of were two: faith comes. If you don't have it you can get it.

How does faith come? Faith comes from hearing. It comes from listening to God. You see, prayer is not just talking to God. Prayer is two-way communication with God. It's holding a very intimate personal conversation with God. So many people think of prayer as merely telling God what they want and what they need. They come to God with a kind of shopping list, present the list, and say "Amen." That really is hardly praying at all. How would you feel as a parent if your child only came to you with a list of what it wanted done for it. You wouldn't feel that the relationship was right, and that's how God feels. When you come to Him with your shopping list God says, "I can easily deal with the things on your list, but it's you I'm interested in, not the things you need." So, God is waiting to have communication with us. He's not merely waiting to hear what we have to say, but He wants us to hear what He has to say. And actually of the two, what God has to say is much more important than what we have to say. Jesus told us that our Father already knows the things that we need. When we come to God telling Him that we need things, we are not telling Him something that He doesn't already know. It's not so much telling God what you need, it's getting into that attitude and relationship with God where you know you'll receive what you need when you tell Him. And that comes from hearing what God has to say.

Sometimes people come to me for counseling and they're full of their problems and their woes, and the way their husband has mistreated them, or the church has mistreated them, or somebody has swindled them, or they have had this problem

since childhood. And often I feel, well, God has given me an answer, but they do so much talking I'm never able to give them the answer. And I think many times we make that mistake with God. We do so much talking we never hear His answer.

In the Old Testament, after the temple of Solomon had been built, God appeared one night to Solomon in a dream and said, "What do you want, I'll give it to you?" And Solomon made a very wise answer. He said, "Give your servant an understanding or discerning heart." That's the English translation, but the Hebrew says, "A hearing heart." There's nothing more precious than a "hearing heart", a heart that hears God.

Let me give you another example from the Old Testament. After David had been established in his kingdom, he had the idea that it would be good to build a house for the Lord, so he shared this with the prophet, Nathan and Nathan said, "That's a good idea. Go ahead and do it."

But that night God spoke to Nathan and He said, "That isn't what I want. David wants to build me a house, but what I want to do is to build a house for David." And so Nathan went back next day with this message.

Can you see the difference, illustrating the difference between our will and God's will? The highest that David could think of was that he would build a house for God, but God's will was on a higher level, that God would build a house for David.

And Nathan went back to David with this message, "God wants to build you a house." And then we read in the account that when David heard this, he went and sat before the Lord. What do you think he was doing as he sat there? I think he was emptying himself of his own ideas and preconceptions, and plans, and getting quiet before the Lord so what the Lord had to say to him could really sink in. And then he prayed this way: (1 Chronicles 17:17 & 23)

> "And this was a small thing in Thine eyes, O God; but Thou hast spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the standard of man of high degree, O Lord God. [And then a little further on he says this:] 'And now, O Lord, let the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house, be established forever, and do as Thou hast spoken.'" (NAS)

That's the key to faith, saying to God, "Do what you said you'll do." But you see, that kind of faith only comes when first of all we hear what God says. As David heard, what God had for him was on a level far higher than he could ever have imagined for himself.

So let me give you this advice as we draw near to the end of my talk today: pray with your Bible open. In fact, I would suggest never begin a serious time of prayer without first reading your Bible. Why? Because there are two reasons. First, God speaks primarily through the Bible. If you want to hear God, most often you'll hear Him through the Bible. Secondly, anything that does not agree with the Bible is not from God. Sometimes there are deceiving voices that represent themselves as the voice of God, but they are not. To guard against, pray with your Bible open.

All right, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the next important requirement for approaching God in prayer.

Radio Program

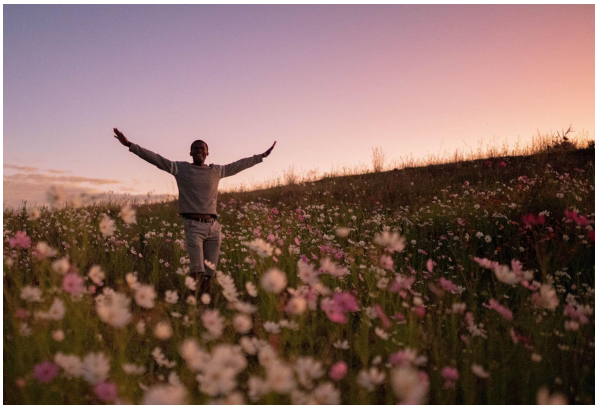
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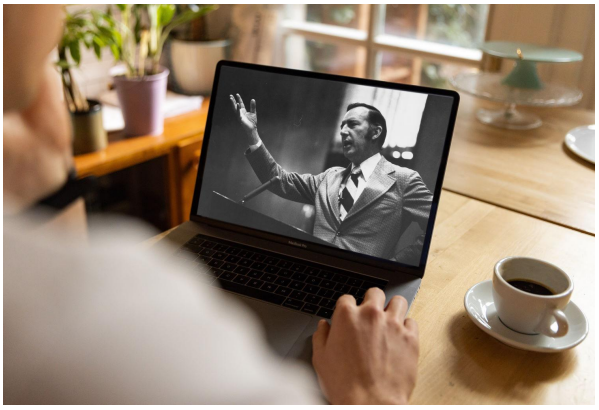
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