

Fourth Requirement for Approaching God: With Worship, Praise and Thanks



How to Pray and Get What You Pray For (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Our theme through this week has been, "How to Pray and Get What You Pray For." So far I've outlined three important requirements for approaching God in prayer. First, we must renounce our own will. Second, we must approach God in faith. Third, we must pray in the name of Jesus. All these requirements, in different ways, have to do with the way we approach God.

Today I'm going to speak about yet one more requirement that also has to do with our approach to God. We must come to Him with worship, with praise, and with thanks. Let me repeat those three words: with worship, with praise, with thanks.

Now these three things are closely related and yet they're distinct, and each one of them is important in our approach to God. First of all, I'll speak about worship. Worship is something that is very little understood in contemporary Christendom. Worship is not praying, worship is not singing hymns, worship is something different. All the biblical words that are translated "worship" both in the Old Testament and in the New describe primarily an attitude of the body. There are different attitudes represented by different words. One means to bend the head low, another means to bend the upper part of the body forward and to stretch out the hands, and the third means to prostrate one's self face downwards in the presence of the one whom one is worshiping. But all the words that are used describe an attitude. Worship is not so much what we say, it's the attitude in which we come.

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah had a vision of the throne of God, and above it he saw the seraphim, the burning fiery creatures that surround God's throne. And he saw that each had six wings and he saw what they were doing with their six wings. With one pair of wings they covered their faces, with the second pair of wings they covered their bodies, with the third pair of wings they flew. Notice that flying comes last. The lesson is that worship comes before service. And worship is twice as important as service. Four wings were

given to worship, two wings to service, and the wings of worship are described before the wings of service. Worship in a sense, is covering your face, it's covering your body, it's bowing low, it's bending the head, it's an attitude. Of course, it does not have to be a physical attitude; we're talking about something in the spirit, the approach of our spirit to God. Jesus said, "The true worshiper must worship God in spirit and in truth," so we are talking about a worship in spirit, an attitude of the spirit, a heart bowed low in the presence of God.

This is represented in the Lord's prayer. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:9:

> "Pray then, in this way: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." (NAS)

After we have first addressed God, the next thing we say is "Hallowed be Thy name." Thy name is holy. It's a privilege even to use Thy name. We do it with reverence, we do it in lowliness, we do it in awe and wonder. Honor and reverence, that's worship, the heart bowed low in God's presence. The true worshiper must worship God in spirit and in truth. It's an attitude of the spirit.

Then we look at praise. Praise, I would say is vocal, it's uttered. It's different from worship. Worship is the attitude, praise is the vocal expression. We praise God for who God is and what He does in general. This is stated in Psalm 48:1:

> "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." (NAS)

Praise should be in proportion to God's own person. He's great, He should be greatly praised. Praise is the response of the human heart to the greatness of God. Great in wisdom, great in power, great in His creative works and acts, great in His redemptive acts, great in His dealings with us. Everything that God is and does is great. And the praise He receives from us should be in proportion to His greatness. "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised." Let me say, you never waste time praising the Lord. Most of us do it far too little.

And then we see in Psalm 100:4 that praise is essential for access to God's presence. Familiar words.

> "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name." (NAS)

Here the Psalmist speaks both about thanksgiving and praise. And he indicates that in order to have access to God, we must come with both, with thanksgiving and with praise. There is no other way to come into God's presence but with thanksgiving and praise. We must begin our prayers not with petitions, but with worship, with thanksgiving and with praise. There's a beautiful phrase in Isaiah 60:18. This is a prophetic description of the City of God, the place where God dwells, the home of God's people, the place of salvation, and speaking of this beautiful place, this city, Isaiah says:

> "...You will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise." (NAS)

Notice this city is surrounded by walls that are salvation. That's God's provision, protection for His people. Salvation is the great all-inclusive word for all that God has provided for His people through the death of Jesus on the cross. It's every benefit and every blessing that has been purchased for us by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, that's salvation. But in this city whose walls are salvation, there are gates.

In the New Testament in the book of Revelation, we're told very clearly the only way into the city is through the gate. And Isaiah tells us the gates are "Praise." What does that say? It says that if you want to get into the city of Salvation, if you want to get into the presence of God, if you want to come into the enjoyment of all God's provision and protection and blessings for His people, there's only one way in, you've got to come through the gate, and every gate is praise, so there's no other way into the presence of God but the way through the gate of Praise. You can stand and call to God afar off in your pitiful condition and God will hear you. Just like the ten lepers that came to Jesus during His earthly ministry, it says, "They stood afar off and cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us," and Jesus heard their cry. And God will hear your cry, but you'll be crying from afar off. That's not where you ought to stay.

The leper that was healed and realized his debt returned and then he no longer stood afar off. He fell down at Jesus' feet and worshiped Him. And that's what God wants each of us to do, to come close, to come through praise and through worship.

Now let me speak for a moment or two on thanksgiving. I said that praise is offered to God for who He is and what He does in general. I believe we offer thanksgiving to God for what He has done for us in particular. Thanksgiving makes all the greatness that's general and universal particular in our case. Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 4:6:

> "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (NAS)

You see what God says there, “everything by prayer.” Years ago in John Wesley’s Journal he made this comment, “I am persuaded that God does everything by prayer and nothing without it.” And I would say “Amen” to that. God does everything by prayer and nothing without it.

Paul says, “By prayer and supplication,” but he adds, “with thanksgiving.” In other words, when you come to God with your requests, never fail to start by thanking Him.

I was brought up in Europe and in Europe parents train their children in a certain way. If a child asks for a cookie (and of course in Britain we used to call that a biscuit), and stretches out his hand to receive it, we always train the child to say “thank you” before he actually gets the cookie in his hand. I think that’s good training for children and I think that’s how God trains His children. God says, “You say `thank you’ and you’ll get it in your hand.”

So, never come to God without thanksgiving. “Everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.” Giving thanks has a very important psychological function. It builds our faith. The more we stop and thank God for all that He’s done for us, the easier it is for us to believe that He’s going to do what we’re going to ask next.

My wife and I pray pretty regularly. About once a week we have a day of prayer and fasting. We have taken to making a list of the things we’re praying and fasting for. We have discovered that to put your specific prayer down in words helps you to understand clearly what it is you are really praying for, but we never begin with our petitions. We always begin with our thanksgiving. As a matter of fact, the further we go the longer our list of thanksgivings gets. In fact, it’s longer than our list of petitions, and by the time we’ve thanked God for all the wonderful things He’s already done, it’s very easy to believe that He’s going to do the things we’re going to speak to Him about next. So remember, come with thanksgiving.

Our time is up for today but I’ll be back with you again next week at this same time Monday through Friday. This week I’ve been dealing with, “The Requirements for Approaching God in Prayer.” Next week I’ll continue with the theme of prayer, but I’ll be speaking about the conditions we need to fulfill in our actual prayers themselves.

Stay tuned now for some important announcements. In particular, how you may obtain a copy of my book, Faith to Live By. This book will give you new insight into the only basis for all successful Christian living which is “Faith.”

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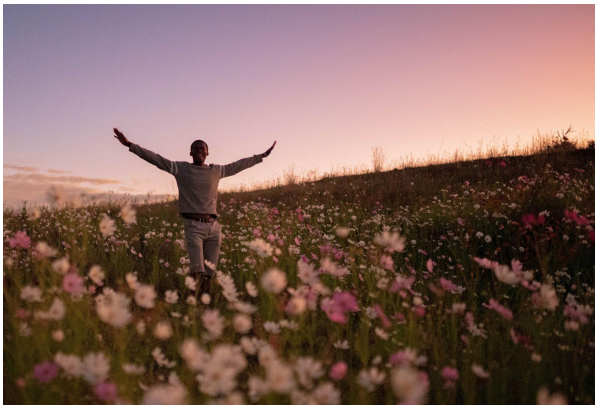
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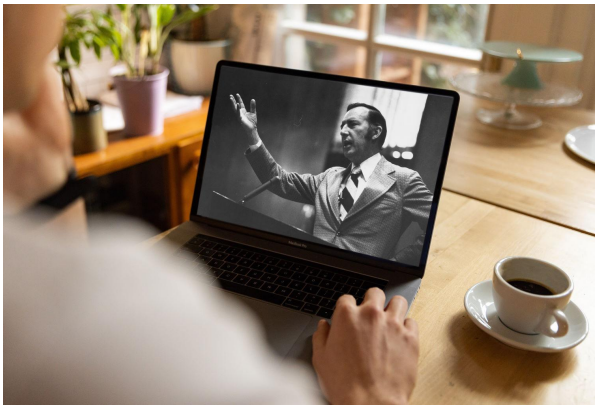
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