

Elements of Successful Praying 1 - With Confidence, Without Condemnation



How to Pray and Get What You Pray For (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same for you.

First, let me say "thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

All last week I was sharing with you on a theme of tremendous practical importance to all of us, "How to Pray and Get What You Pray For." This week I'm going to continue with the same theme. There's so much more still to share.

Last week I dealt mainly with the way we approach God in prayer. I outlined four main requirements for a right approach to God. First, renounce your own will and so open up to the will of God. Second, approach God in faith, a personal confidence in God Himself. Pray in the name of Jesus and fourthly, enter God's presence with worship, praise and thanks.

This week I'm going beyond our actual approach to God. I'm going to explain various elements that are needed to make up a complete and successful prayer.

Today I'm going to speak about the first element of a successful prayer. It can be stated two ways: one positive, the other negative. Positively, it is with confidence. Negatively, it is without condemnation. These are like the two opposite sides of one coin. The positive side with confidence, the negative side without condemnation. Condemnation will always undermine confidence.

Let's look at some scriptures which emphasize this aspect of successful prayer. I'll turn, first of all, to Hebrews 4:16:

> "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (NAS)

Two reasons are given here why we should have this kind of confidence. First of all, we're praying to someone who's on a throne. What does a throne indicate? A King. Not merely A king, but the King. The King of all kings, the Lord of all lords, the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the One who said, "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." We're praying to someone who has both the authority and the power to do what we ask. He's sitting on a throne. Let's lift our eyes from ourselves and our own needs and problems and look up to that glorious throne.

Then it's a throne of grace. Grace is always more than we can deserve or earn. Grace is one of the key words in the New Testament and it always stands for something that goes beyond anything we can earn or achieve by our own efforts. So, because it's a throne of grace we are not limited to what we deserve or to what we can achieve or to what our own efforts can accomplish for us. So, as you come in prayer, remember you're coming to a throne and it's a throne of grace.

Then, a second reason why we can come with confidence is because we have been invited by God to come. And God invites us that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

One of the things I've always been conscious of in my Christian life is that I stand in need of the mercy of God. But this Scripture encourages me to believe that if I ever come for mercy, mercy is what I will receive. I believe that the reason some people do not receive mercy is simply that they don't see their need of it and come in faith to receive it.

And then it say we're to come for help in time of need. We're not to look at the circumstances. We're not to say, "Well, the situation is so grave and the problems are so great that there's nothing to be done about it." Because it's just at a time of need, it's just when the problems are great, that God invites us to come.

Let me read that verse to you again and keep in mind the thoughts that I've brought out.

> "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Remember, it's a throne of grace. And we've been invited. If we come on the basis of the invitation, God will not turn us away.

Let's look at another beautiful scripture in Hebrews 10:19 and 22:

> "Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." (NAS)

Notice, confidence and full assurance. Everything suggests boldness, boldness based upon the fact that the blood of Jesus has been shed on our behalf and has been sprinkled in the very presence of God. And the blood is now speaking on our behalf even when we do not know how to pray.

You'll notice that in both those phrases from Hebrews that I've read, we have the word "let us." That's rather important. It indicates two things. First of all, it indicates a decision. Secondly, it's a plural decision. It's made by more than one person. And sometimes we need God in a way that we have to come to Him collectively, corporately, not just as an individual, but as a member of a body with the whole body praying together with us. I've said that from the positive point of view we are expected to approach God with confidence. I've said that the negative side of that is that we do not come with condemnation. Let's look at some of the passages of scripture that speak about the need to be free from condemnation. One good passage is Psalm 66:18 where the psalmist says:

> "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear..." (NAS)

I believe that means that if I begin to search my own heart and doubt my own standing before God and question whether I'm really forgiven and begin to doubt God's mercy and God's grace, which He's invited me to receive, I begin to think in terms of my own merits. And the devil is permitted to remind me of bad things I've done, of my failures and weaknesses. If the devil can once get us to focus on our own selves and weaknesses and failings in our own lives, then we do not approach God with confidence. And so the psalmist says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." The lesson is that we're not to look at ourselves. We're to lift up our eyes to that throne of grace. We're to realize that we're not coming in our own merits or our own righteousness.

In one of the psalms of David, he says, "Lord, hear me, according to Thy righteousness and according to Thy faithfulness." How important to remember that it's not our

righteousness and it's not our faithfulness that is the basis for our confidence, but it's God's righteousness and God's faithfulness that is the basis of our confidence.

In 1 John 3:21-22, John expresses the same thought:

> "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him..." (NAS)

You see, we have to get rid of that condemnation in our own heart. Any attitude that thinks that we have some kind of righteousness or claim in ourselves to approach God always results in our approaching Him without full confidence because there's nothing ultimately in ourselves. We have no righteousness of our own. Our confidence cannot be based in ourselves. So, we've got to come to a place where we do not allow our hearts to condemn us. We have to come to a place where we're trusting not in our own righteousness or our own wisdom, but trusting in God's faithfulness, and that produces confidence.

Again, in Romans 8:1, Paul says:

> "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

And in the remainder of the chapter he paints the most glorious picture of the life that's filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, all the blessings and privileges and benefits of that life. But the entry into that chapter and the entry into that kind of life is there in the first verse, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We must lay aside condemnation.

And all this really goes back to the third requirement for the right approach to God which I stated in my talks last week. It is that we come in the name of Jesus. When we come in the name of Jesus, this assures us that our prayers are heard because of Jesus. It takes our attention off our own lives and our own righteousness. Because we come in the name of Jesus we believe that our sins have been forgiven and that we are accepted by God as His children. We come as God's children and not as beggars. This pleases God. This is how He wants us to come.

There's a beautiful picture in the book of Esther of how Esther came into the presence of the king. It was a time of tremendous crisis, the lives of her people were at stake and the king had not invited her to come. She took her life in her hands. But, after fasting three days it says she put on her royal attire and went into the king's presence and he received her. Notice, she went in like a queen, not like a beggar, and that's how Christ wants His church to come to Him, like a queen, not like a beggar, believing that she's received because of His grace and His righteousness.

Well, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the second element of a successful prayer and that is to have the right motive.

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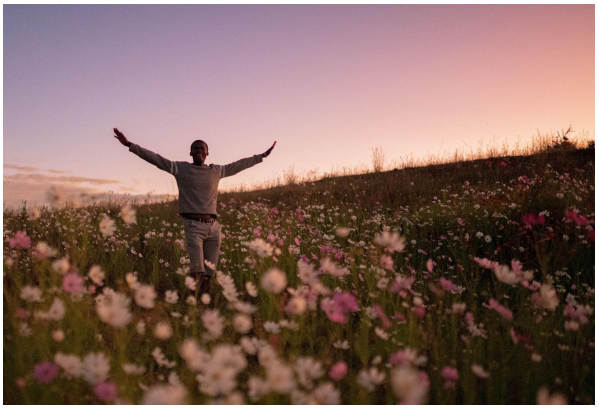

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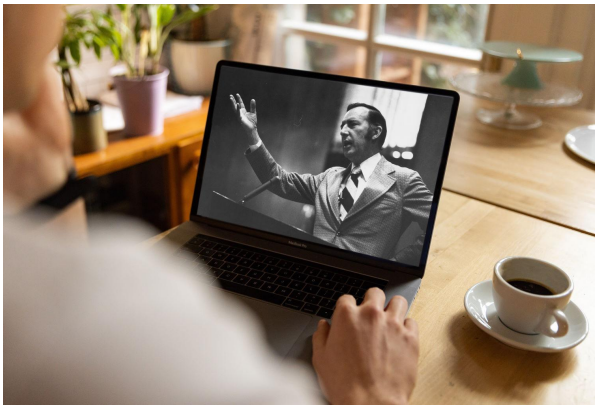

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