

Elements of Successful Praying 4 - Directed by the Holy Spirit



How to Pray and Get What You Pray For (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to share together on a theme that's of such tremendous practical importance to all of us, "How to Pray and Get What You Pray For."

So far this week I've explained three important elements of successful praying. The first, that we pray with confidence, without condemnation. The second, that we pray with the right motive and that is for God's glory. The third, that we pray out of relationship, that it is necessary that we forgive others, we lay aside wrath and dissension because all these things are hindrances to our prayers, particularly hindrances to the prayers of husbands and wives.

Today I'm going to deal with the next important element in successful praying. This has to do with the part that the Holy Spirit plays in our prayers. It can be stated very simply: The only kind of prayer that is acceptable to God is one directed by the Holy Spirit. Actually, this goes far beyond our prayers. It applies to every area of the Christian life. The only kind of Christian life acceptable to God is one directed by the Holy Spirit. Paul brings this out in the 8th chapter of Romans. In Romans 8:14, he says:

> "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons God." (NAS)

That's what constitutes a person, a son or a child of God, that he's being led by the Spirit of God. You see, to become a child of God you must be born of God's Spirit. That's the initial experience without which you cannot enter the Christian life. But to live as a child of God, you must continue to be led by the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit. Now, many people who've been born again really don't know how to be led by the Holy Spirit of God when it comes to Christian living. This is perhaps particularly true when it comes to praying. But later on in this chapter Paul applies this principle specifically to prayer. In Romans 8:26-27, he says:

> "And in the same way the Spirit [capital S, the Holy Spirit] also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He [that's the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (NAS)

Paul says that we have a weakness. We all have a weakness. It's not a physical sickness, it's not even a mental sickness, but it's just part of our old, carnal nature. And the weakness is this: we don't know how to pray as we should. There are different versions of that verse, some say we don't know what to pray for, others say we don't know how to pray. I believe both are true. We don't know what to pray for, we don't know how to pray. Sometimes we think we know what to pray for but we still don't know how to pray about it. But at other times we don't know either what to pray for or how to pray. We're at a loss. God's remedy for this is to send us the Holy Spirit to help us. He's the comforter, the helper, the One who comes to help us lead the kind of life and pray the kind of prayers that we need. And so Paul says here that when the Holy Spirit comes in, in a certain sense, He takes over for us and, as we yield to Him, He does the praying that we need through us. Paul's language is very personal here. He says, "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words," and again, in the next verse, "He [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." In a certain sense, the secret of successful praying is turning over to the Holy Spirit, yielding intelligently but voluntarily to Him, and letting Him pray through you the kind of prayer that really needs to be prayed.

Notice that Paul says this kind of prayer can come in various ways. One way that he speaks about here is in groanings too deep for words. Now, I've been present when people were given that kind of prayer. It's very moving, it's very solemn, It's almost frightening. It's important to understand that many of the things that we really need to pray about are too deep for words. The ordinary words of our normal expression just are not adequate for the things that we need to say in prayer. You see, deep down inside every one of us there's something much bigger than our little mind. It's what the Bible calls our spirit. Our spirit is always hungering and thirsting for God. Our spirit longs to reach for God, our spirit has things locked up within it that it longs to express to God in prayer. But as long as we're limited to what our puny little minds can censor and set as reasonable and valid, our spirit cannot fully express itself. So, one of the ways the Holy Spirit liberates our spirit to pray effectively is with groanings that are too deep for words. That's one kind of prayer.

Now, another way that the Holy Spirit can help is by giving us the right prayer in our own language, but it's not a prayer that we would ever have prayed if left to ourselves. I remember very vividly how this first happened to me. I was a soldier in the British Army and I did not yet know the Lord Jesus in a personal way; and a family, a Christian family, in the town where I was stationed invited me and a fellow soldier to have supper with them in their home one Sunday evening. So we went along to their home and they were all committed Christians and I'd never been in a home like that. They started by asking God to bless their food. I'd never been in a home where anybody ever did that. But after I got adjusted to that, the supper was delicious and the meal went on and I thought I was really getting settled down. And then, at the end of the meal, without any warning everybody stated to pray. And there were about seven or eight people around this oval table, and I noticed quickly that they were praying in turn, one after the other. And calculation showed me that my turn was coming and very quickly. And I had never prayed aloud in public in all my life. I was literally paralyzed with fear. And when my turn came I had no idea what was going to happen. I just opened my mouth and I blurted out these words, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief." I didn't even know they were in the Bible! But that was perhaps as good a prayer as I've ever prayed. I take no credit for it. The Holy Spirit gave it to me.

I've spoken about two ways in which the Holy Spirit can help us to pray. The first is with groanings too deep for words. The other is by giving us a prayer in our own language, but it's not one which we ourselves could ever have thought of.

Now, there's a third way in which the Holy Spirit can help us to pray and that is through a prayer language, in an unknown tongue. This is spoken about, of course, many times in the New Testament. Some people find it hard to understand. The truth of the matter is it can't be fully understood. It's one of those activities of our spirit which goes beyond the ability of our little minds fully to comprehend. But thank God, that Christian experience is not limited to what our minds can comprehend. Thank God that we have a God that's bigger than our little mind, and one of the ways in which God liberates us from the tyranny of our mind over our total lives is by giving us, through the Holy Spirit, a prayer language. We are praying in a language that's very real but it's not a language we ourselves understand. We've just handed over the Holy Spirit and let Him pray through us what needs to be prayed in this new prayer language.

Today, all around the world millions of people are entering into this experience and finding it corresponds exactly to what's written about it in the New Testament. Listen to what

Paul says about it in 1 Corinthians 14:2-4:

> "For one who speaks in a tongue [an unknown tongue] does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself..." (NAS)

So, what are we doing when we pray in this prayer language, this unknown tongue? Paul says we're doing three things. First of all, we're speaking direct to God, not to man; that's a privilege in itself, to be able to speak directly to Almighty God. Secondly he says, in our spirits we're speaking mysteries, things too deep and profound for our little minds fully to grasp. Thirdly he says, when we speak in a tongue we're edifying or building ourselves up spiritually even though our mind doesn't really understand all that's going on.

Paul returns to this in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 and he says this:

> "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also." (NAS)

Notice that we have various options as to how to pray. Sometimes we pray with the mind. We pray with words that we understand but we trust the Holy Spirit to correct us. At other times we give our minds a rest and we let the Holy Spirit take over and through our spirit pray with a language and words that we ourselves do not understand. But we know, according to scripture, that we're speaking to God, that we're speaking mysteries, we're sharing God's secrets, and that we're edifying ourselves.

Now, another important aspect of prayer is that it's a major weapon of spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6, Paul is talking about spiritual warfare and he says in verse 18:

> "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit..." (NAS)

This is in the context of spiritual warfare. Prayer, amongst other things, is a tremendous spiritual weapon. I compare it to an intercontinental ballistic missile, such as we have today, which can be launched from one continent against some stronghold or strategic position in the territory of a potential enemy in another continent thousands and thousands of miles away. But in order for the missile to take effect and to accomplish its work, its computer has to be rightly set. And I believe that this is a little parable. If we're to pray effectively in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has to set the computer. He has to determine the objective that we're praying against.

All right, listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 3:20 as we close for today:

> "Now to His who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." (NAS)

Notice that the answer to our prayers depends on the power that works within us. What is that power? Of course, it's the power of the Holy Spirit. The more He works within us, the more effective our prayers are.

All right, it's time for me to close today, but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I still have one more element to successful praying to deal with. I'll be speaking about that tomorrow.

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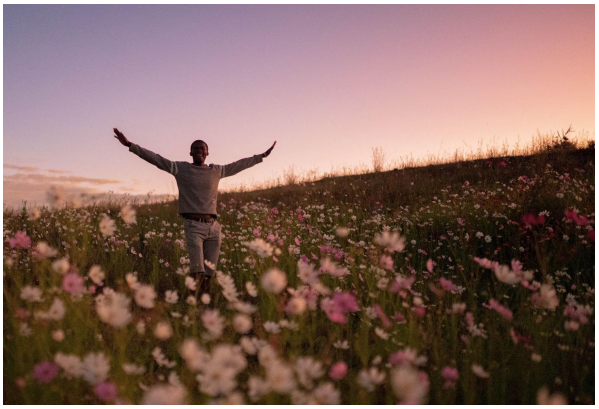

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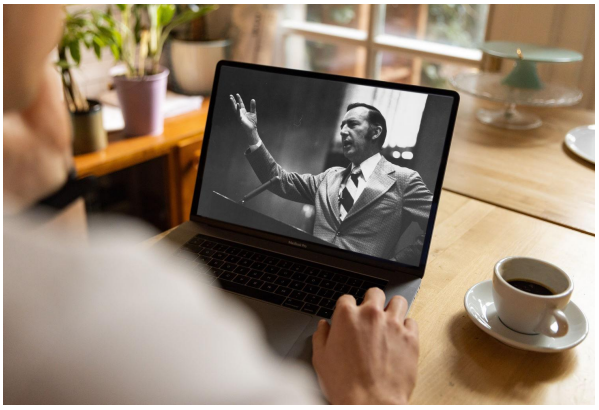

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