

CALIFORNIA YOUTH CONFERENCE 2017

Subject – *The principles and power of prayer*

Theme – “Pray without ceasing”

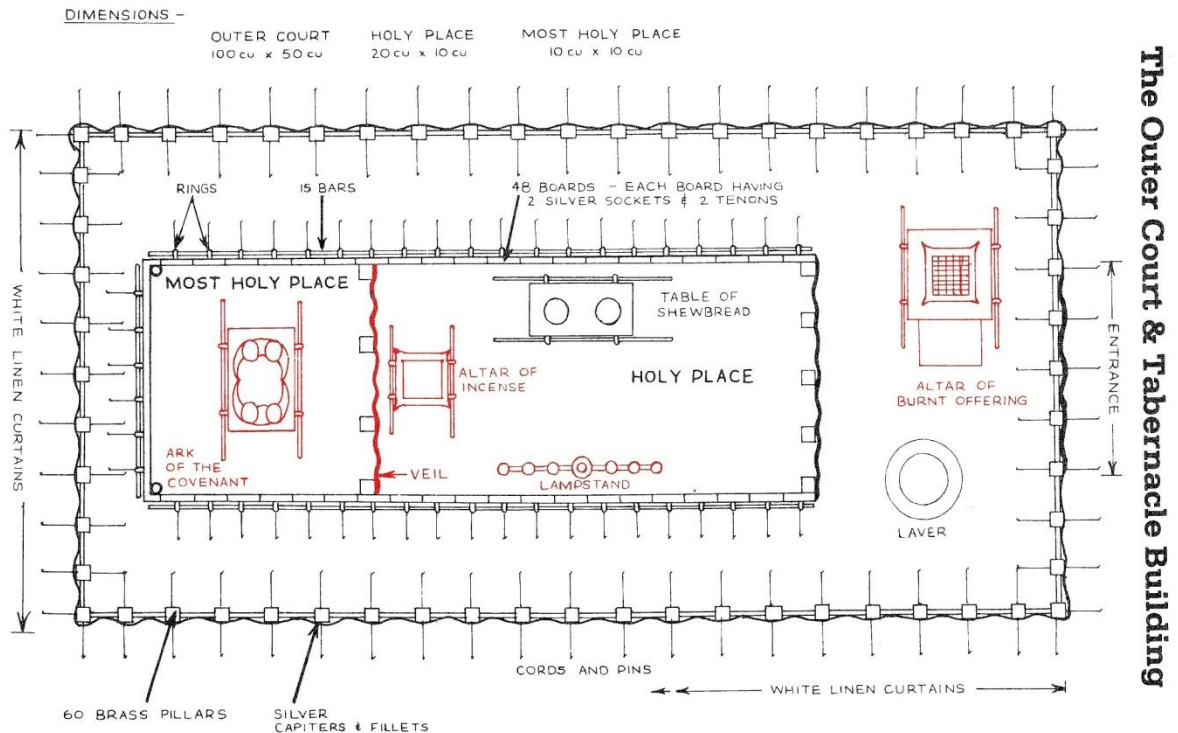
Topics for study and discussion over 5 days:

Day 1. The fundamentals of prayer

a. What is prayer and why is it so important?

“When we open the Word of God, God speaks to us; when we engage in Prayer, we speak to Him. The person who studies all the time, but never prays is like those dull companions who are always ready to listen, but never contribute anything to the conversation. There is nothing stimulating in such company. On the other hand, the person who is always praying, but never studying, is like those garrulous people who dominate all conversation, and are never ready to listen to what others might like to say. Such conversationalists soon bore us! The ideal companion is one who is prepared both to listen and to talk, to interchange thoughts and conversation. His presence gives us pleasure, and we delight to converse with Him.” - HP Mansfield “Making Prayer Powerful” pg. 7

Ps. 141:2 – “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”



“During the Mosaic economy, the priests in the Temple, each morning and evening, burned incense on the Golden Altar just outside the veil that hid the Most Holy from

view. For this purpose, coals were taken from the altar of burnt offering in the court of the Temple. Thus contact was made with two altars: the Brazen Altar for burnt offering, and the Golden Altar for incense. In this act of worship, **incense symbolised prayer**. It taught that prayer, to be really effective, must be ignited with a sacrifice that pointed forward to the Lamb of God that Yahweh declared He would provide for the needs of humanity. The metals of the two altars were significant. Brass is the metal of flesh; gold is the metal of a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7). The basis of acceptable worship is sacrifice and faith. Sacrifice is necessary because of the nature of flesh; whereas prayer is an act of faith which brings the worshipper into the very presence of Yahweh.” IBID pg. 9

The Divinely appointed ingredients of incense

Exodus 30:34-36 - And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

“**stacte**” – *nataph* – a liquid drop, suggestive of a tear. Stacte is a kind of myrrh. It is obtained by inserting a deep gash in the branches of the tree, and collecting the liquid. This suggests the principle of sacrifice. No prayer will be acceptable to Yahweh unless the one offering it is prepared to subordinate his will to that of the Father. “Not my will but Thine be done,” is the attitude required (see Luke 22:44). And that means sacrifice of self-interest if necessary. The Jews and others suppose it to be what was afterwards called the balm of Gilead.

onycha” – *shechailith* – Denotes the *onycha* (nail-fish, from its form). It was made from a white sea-shell found on the shores of the Red Sea and therefore reminded Israel of their deliverance from Egypt. When Onycha was burnt, it gave forth a pleasant odour – indicative of the sense of gratitude felt when deliverance from bondage is contemplated.

“**galbanum**” – *chelbenah* (probably from *chalay*, milk or gum, and *lavan*, white), is the gummy, resinous juice of an umbelliferous (with flower heads shaped like an opened umbrella) plant. When any part of the plant is broken, there issues out a little thin juice, of a cream colour, of a fat, tough substance, like gum, composed of many small, shining grains, of a strong, piercing smell and a sharp, warm taste. It is acrid smelling when burnt. It is said that its main use was to keep serpents away - a significant element in regard to prayer. The fat of sacrificial offerings was always burnt (Lev. 3:16-17), symbolising the worshipper's energy consumed in Divine service.

“**frankincense**” – *lebônâh* – A white resin burned as fragrant incense. This is obtained from a spice tree which yields a white gum at the slightest scratch. It signified “whiteness,” the symbol of purity. Prayer should be such: pure, without false motives, or ostentation. Its instant emergence when the tree is scratched speaks of the constant use of prayer on all occasions, particularly when under pressure.

“**each shall there be a like weight**” – Every aspect of prayer symbolised by the individual elements of the compounded incense was to be in equal measure. Prayers, individual or delivered on behalf of the community need to be balanced with submission to the Divine will (i.e. absence of self-interest); the humility of gratitude and appreciation; the spirit that desires to be delivered from evil so that energy may be put into Divine service; and that also hungers for righteousness through building a close relationship with God by constant prayer.

b. When to pray aloud or in silence? Why is movement of lips important? – 1 Sam. 1:12-13

1 Sam. 1:13 – Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

Christ condemned voluble prayers offered merely for public consumption – Matt. 6:5-7. Such prayers are designed to draw attention to oneself, not Yahweh. Man is thus glorified by his fellows, not God. The key issue here is the reality of God and the reverence owed to Him.

Hannah believed in the reality of Yahweh even amidst the degenerate priests of her day who succeeded in making men abhor the offerings of God – 1 Sam. 2:17. Hophni and Phinehas doubtless prayed in public with loud voice, but were insensitive to the presence of the God they blasphemed by their behaviour. Hannah moved her lips to frame the words she spoke to Yahweh out of the depths of her heart (“for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” – Luke 6:45), but did not want her words to be heard by those who surrounded her. This spoke of the absolute genuineness of her motivation and desire.

The human mind is a fickle thing. Thoughts rapidly replace one another and are easily jumbled or misdirected. When rational thought cooperates with tongue to produce carefully considered words that are articulated by the inaudible movement of lips there is evidence of genuinely heart felt sentiments. Such was Hannah’s example worthy of exemplification.

Neh. 2:4 – Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Nehemiah’s brief inaudible prayer in the presence of the Persian king was probably not accompanied by movement of the lips because of the highly sensitive situation in which he found himself. As the king’s cupbearer (i.e. drink taster to ensure the king was not poisoned by assassins), Nehemiah was in a highly sensitive position of trust. At a crucial moment he sought God’s intervention by a brief prayer in his mind. The same motivation seen in Hannah is evident in Nehemiah – an absolute conviction in the reality and omnipresence of Yahweh.

Public prayer on behalf of others must be infused with the same awareness. Hence, it will not be ostentatious, unnecessarily repetitive, or designed to draw attention to the offerer.

c. Prayer of gratitude and confession before entering a solemn covenant – Neh. 9

A simple analysis of the public prayer of Neh. 9 demonstrates the principles noted above:

- Study of the Word and prayer were undertaken in equal proportions – V.3;
- The omnipresent power and greatness of Yahweh is acknowledged – V.5-6;
- Their Abrahamic heritage and its promised deliverance is remembered – V.7-12;
- The critical importance on literal and spiritual bread and water emphasised – V.13-15;
- A history of apostasy and rebellion recounted and confessed – V.16-18;
- The mercy of Yahweh celebrated – V.19-25;
- Disobedience and rebellion justly but mercifully punished – V.26-31;
- Humble recognition that present difficulties stem from past indiscretions – V.32-37;
- An appeal that lessons from the past might inform and improve the future – V.38.

d. Do we get any help in prayer today? If so, how? – Rom. 8:28

“If we feel that our prayers are inadequate or ineffectual, and desire to make them more powerful, we must seek the means of doing so from the instruction of the Word.

All the principles that go to make Prayer powerful are set forth and reiterated in Scripture. They are there for our seeking.” - HP Mansfield “Making Prayer Powerful” pg. 6

1 John 5:14-15 – And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

The governing principles here are:

- Yahweh hears the prayers of the righteous – Ps. 34:17; Prov. 15:29;
- Nothing is too hard for Yahweh – Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Job 42:2;
- Yahweh will never abdicate His righteousness or submerge His principles – Isa. 42:8; 48:11. Every request must be in harmony with His will;
- He always answers but His answers may come in various forms – silence (because that is best for His servants at that time); delay for the same reason; an answer so rapid that it produces uncertainty that it is in fact an answer to prayer – Gen. 24:12-21.

e. Head coverings for sisters – when and where? – 1 Cor. 11:3-16

1 Cor. 11:3-9 – But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

Any honest reading of Paul’s words can only conclude that when God’s redemptive work in Christ is being remembered in ecclesial gatherings (such as Memorial Meetings), the principles established in Genesis must take precedence over human ambition and self-interest. These principles include:

- Humble recognition of the Divine hierarchy set in the beginning – God, Christ, man, woman;
- Acknowledgement (based on that hierarchy) of the headship of those in echelon above;
- Recognition that it was Adam that was made in both the image (i.e. shape) and the glory (i.e. mental and moral capacity) of God/Elohim (Gen. 1:26), while the woman only shares the latter;
- Acceptance that a man praying with head covered dishonours Christ (his spiritual head), and that a woman praying with her literal head uncovered in such gatherings dishonours her spiritual head (her husband) by a failure to acknowledge these principles;
- The knowledgeable and humble sister places a ‘sign’ on her head to indicate her appreciation and acceptance of the principles established in Eden. The word rendered “power” in V.10 is *exousia* which essentially means delegated authority. It is important that sisters understand why a head covering is required and that they make a personal choice to humbly adopt the practice. They have that delegated authority to willingly conform to Divine principles. However, the Apostle understood that in some cases self-interested sisters might rebel and accordingly makes it clear that no such practice as sisters being uncovered at memorial services was practiced anywhere in the Brotherhood – 1 Cor. 11:16.

The question of what other ecclesial gatherings apart from Memorial Meetings might require sisters to wear a head covering is a matter for personal conscience. Some sisters recognising the principles expressed by the Apostle wear head coverings to all gatherings of the ecclesia. Some even choose to wear a head covering in the home for prayer and Bible readings. Such attitudes should be respected as being indicative of sensitivity to Divine principles.

f. How is prayer answered today?

“It has been assessed that out of over six hundred prayers for specific things recorded in the Bible, no less than four hundred and fifty revealed answers are recorded. In fact, every prayer is answered; though not always in the way we desire.” – HP Mansfield “Making Prayer Powerful” pg. 6

This question was partly addressed in section ‘d’ above. God does answer the prayers of His servants whether by silence, delay or immediate response, but this question asks how; i.e. in what way when there is a definitive response from God does that actually happen? Without restricting the range of God’s ability to respond to our prayers in the latter days when there is no open vision (1 Sam. 3:1), or gifts of the Spirit (as were granted to 1st century believers through the Apostles), the primary way that God works today is through Divine providence.

In his superb book “The Ways of Providence” Bro. Robert Roberts makes the following comments in his introductory chapter:

It is common to speak of "providence," but the common way of speaking of it shows it is not common to understand the subject. So many things are ascribed to "providence" that the reflecting mind, acting apart from the enlightenment of the Scriptures, would be liable either to doubt whether there is such a thing as providence at all, or to conclude that all things are "providence," which would practically be the same thing, for in that case, the central idea of providence, as a special discrimination and influence in the shaping of circumstances in particular cases, would be lost.

It is of great practical importance to have distinct and correct ideas on the subject. It is not a matter of barren speculation. It touches the springs of action, and bears upon the development of character. True views on the subject will sustain and expand and ennoble the mind, while false views will have a contracting and withering and depressing effect. True views will keep a man in the path of wise action, while erroneous views may turn him into a fool. True views will enable him to know when to recognise the hand of God in past and current history, and it may be in his own life...

It will also show us that all human affairs are not divinely regulated; that many things happen that are not of God; that in only a certain narrow channel of things is providence a fact; that only certain classes are providentially guided and controlled; and that divine interposition as often takes the shape of bringing about apparently evil circumstances as those that are obviously good, and that not always with a good purpose, so far as the particular person operated upon is concerned, though in the wide sense, and as regards a certain class, all divine operations have good as the ultimate end.

There is such a thing as chance, as distinct from what God does. The Bible declares this (Eccles. 9:11) and the experience of every day teaches it. Every moment teems with the incidents of chance. The whirl of a cloud of dust before the windy gust coming round the corner of the house illustrates the point. God has control of all chance; but all chance is not controlled. It is controlled when His purpose requires it.

As a clear example of how providence works in the lives of believers, Bro. H.P. Mansfield writes as follows:

The most commonplace events of our lives are under the control of God. He may often be at work for our good when we little think it or deserve it. God sometimes opens our eyes to our sins, and saves us from the consequences of them, in the most natural way. The thought is precious, and full of comfort for us, who are so weak and so erring. An illustration of God's kind providence is to be found in the incident respecting David, Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25). The case is familiar. David, on account of abominable treatment received at the hands of Nabal, a grossly selfish churl, is in a state of fury, and plans revenge. He is saved, however, from maturing his unlawful intention by the intervention of a common-sense, tactful, God-fearing woman, and is thus saved from bitter remorse and divine displeasure. But how natural was it all! Yet God was manipulating matters for the sake of upright but erring David. God permitted him to fall into sin, but delivered him from it. God "sent" Abigail — God "kept back" David from murder - God "smote" Nabal. God did it all. Yet no apparent miracle was wrought — God was not seen. The lesson to us is not far to seek. It is not that we may presume on the goodness of God to shield us from the natural effects of naughtiness, but that we may count upon His helping hand, if, in our case, a David-like disposition exists. We may be allowed to fall, but if we are of the David type (impulsive, but not wilfully rebellious) our failings will not be allowed to destroy us. How often have we, through possessing a David-like mind, been saved from powerful, deadly temptations, which, had they been yielded to, would have altered for the worse the whole trend of our lives! - HP Mansfield "Making Prayer Powerful" pg. 99

Day 2. Prayers of the Patriarchs

Three times in Scripture Abraham is called "the friend of God" – 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23. True friends have confidence in one another and regularly communicate. Revelation and prayer played a critical role in the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham as revealed in Gen. 18:17-19.

Gen 18:17-19 – And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

This Divine insight into the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham reveals some very important lessons in regard to prayer:

- True friends do not conceal from each other matters important to the fulfilment of God's purpose in their lives and the lives of others;
- Confidence is born of observation of attitude and behaviour over a period of time and the experience of trial;
- The development of such a friendship always has an ultimate goal.

The considerations that follow amplify these lessons.

a. Abram's request for the promised seed – Gen. 15:1-6

The dramatic events leading to Yahweh's fourth promise to Abraham in Gen. 15 gave cause for fear and concern. Bro. Carter explains in The Letter to the Hebrews:

It is clear from Abraham's words that in the worship of God in company with Melchizedek Abraham had made a solemn dedication of service to God. Some intimate words had passed between priest and worshipper, and some great resolve registered. The meeting had set Abraham's course and had given him the moral earnestness to follow it, though it meant refusing the overtures of the King of Sodom and offering a repulse to him that could make him an embittered enemy.

Yahweh's promise to be a 'shield' would have relevance to Abram personally and to his natural seed hundreds of years later (Gen. 15:13-16), but it was the promise of an "exceeding great reward" that troubled Abram. Fifteen years after the first promise in Ur and 10 years after the promise of a seed (Gen. 12:7), he and Sarai were childless. Hence, Abram's prayer:

Gen. 15:2 – And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

It is important to note that in the record it is Abram who speaks next, not Yahweh. This indicates that an immediate answer to prayer was not forthcoming. This is God's method. He wants to see faith and persistence in prayer as the mark of trust and dependence. Similarly, we must learn to be patient and persistent in prayer.

The next test for Abram was an answer to his prayer that seemed impossible from a human perspective:

Gen. 15:5 – And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

God tests Abram in the entire process. Firstly, by delay; then by promising an outcome that far exceeds his expectations. Why would it be any different for Abraham's spiritual seed?

b. Isaac's sorrowful meditation at Lahai-roi – Gen. 24:62-63

The well Lahai-roi is intimately connected with the allegory of Hagar and Ishmael, and Sarah and Isaac. It was named by Hagar after the appearance of an angel instructing her to return and submit to Sarai. The promise made concerning Ishmael set forth the character of Abraham's natural seed for generations to come.

Gen. 16:12 – But, he, will be a wild ass of a man, his hand, against every one, and every ones hand against him—yet, in presence of all his brethren, shall he have his habitation. (Rotherham)

The male ass became a symbol for Israel in Scripture. The contentious character of the Jews in fulfilment of the allegory is noted by Paul in 1 Thess. 2:14-15, while the desire to be "seen of men" (what is meant allegorically by "dwelling in the presence of all his brethren") has been the character of religious Jews for millennia – Matt. 23:5.

The name Lahai-roi is used three times in the Genesis record, each in a significant context. In Gen. 16:13 Hagar is perplexed by the penetrating gaze of the Almighty. As she represents the Mosaic covenant in the allegory (Gal. 4:24), her perplexity refers to the discomfort that law presents to those living under it. As Paul noted, the Law exposed his sinfulness and emphasised his failings – Rom. 7:7-14. So, in naming the well she points to her own experience – "Thou *El* seest me". Gen. 16:14 curiously notes that it was between Kadesh and Bered. Kadesh signifies "sanctuary" or "holy place", while Bered means "hail" which is always used scripturally in the context of judgement. Therein lies the key message of the allegory. Living under law cannot deliver eternal life, only judgement, but living in the presence of God by faith leads to eternal life by the grace of God.

The next two occasions that the name **Lahai-roi** is used emphasise that point. In Gen. 24 the parable of the call of the Gentiles to be included in the bride of Christ (typed by Isaac) unfolds.

Three years after his mother Sarah's death, Isaac continues to frequent "the well of the living One my beholder" (as Hagar had called it). He was there in sorrowful meditation (the Hebrew word *suach* only occurs here – Strong - to muse pensively; and BDB - to meditate, muse, commune, speak). This is proven by V.67 which indicates Isaac was comforted after his mother's death on taking Rebekah into Sarah's tent as her replacement in his life. For 3 years heart-felt prayer had clearly been involved. More latterly as he dealt with grief and emptiness, Isaac would have prayed that the mission of Abraham's servant would be subject to providence and Divine blessing. The answer to his prayers had very personal benefits and far-reaching implications for God's people of all ages who as Sarah's/Zion's children were foreseen in the parable.

After Abraham sent his sons by Keturah eastward across the Jordan to evangelise the land of Uz (Gen. 25:6), he fell asleep and was buried in Machpelah. Gen.25:11 immediately states that Yahweh blessed Isaac and that he dwelt by the well Lahai-roi. Living in the presence of Yahweh by faith with a clear conscience is what this place represents. It bespeaks a place of prayer and meditation. The antitypical 'Isaac' taught and practised this principle – John 3:19-21.

c. Jacob's prayer and vow at Bethel – Gen. 28:20-22

The events involving Jacob at Bethel in Gen. 28 had far-reaching implications for God's purpose through the Patriarchs and the promises He made to them. Angels ascending and descending on Jacob would continue their work among Jew and Gentile for millennia (John 1:51); a stone used for a pillow stood upright in the morning as a pillar and anointed with oil would become the symbol for the ecclesia formed in the wake of Christ's sacrificial work (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Bethel "the house of God" prefigured a place of 'mighty ones' as the ecclesia should be. Accordingly, Jacob's prayer incorporating a vow of commitment is an important lesson for all who are called Abraham's seed.

Gen. 28:20 – And Jacob voweth a vow, saying, "Seeing God is with me, and hath kept me in this way which I am going, and hath given to me bread to eat, and a garment to put on..." (Young's Literal)

Jacob's vow is not a bargaining deal as suggested by the KJV translation – **"If God will be with me... then shall the LORD be my God."** It is in fact what such a prayer should be – a full commitment made from a sense of gratitude based on experience of the goodness of God.

d. Jacob's prayer at Jabbok – Gen. 32:9-12 (Hos. 12:3-6)

The longest night of Jacob's life was to produce one of the finest prayers of the era of the Patriarchs. The phrase "that same night" in Gen. 32:13 is repeated again in verses 21 and 22. This was the time of "Jacob's trouble" and he was "saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7) because Yahweh "redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he" (i.e. Esau). Jacob spent the early part of this long night commanding deliverances for Jacob (Cp. v.17 with Ps. 44:3-4), taking out an 'insurance policy' before prayer. These events were designed to remove from Jacob his tendency to self-reliance, a very human characteristic implied by the meaning of his name. Even after his marvellous prayer of desperation in Vv.9-12, Jacob continues to plot his own path of redemption from the hand of his brother.

In v.20 we read of his plan in which the word *paneh* is employed four times in one sentence – "For he said, I will appease (*kaphar paneh* – cover his face) him with the present that goeth before me (*paneh* – my face), and afterward I will see his face (*paneh*); peradventure he will accept of me (*paneh* – my face)." The face he really needed to see was the face of the angel, and this was soon to come – **Gen. 32:30 – "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel ('the face of God'): for I have seen God face to face (*paniym* to *paniym*), and my life is preserved."** Jacob is renamed Israel during this crisis to memorialise what is achieved by God in his life.

It is in this context that Jacob's superb prayer of appeal to Yahweh is very important to the consideration of what makes prayer powerful.

Gen. 32:9-12 – And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

Careful analysis of this prayer spoken in the dark of night under enormous pressure reveals that it contains all the essential elements of effective prayer:

- The importance of heritage is first mentioned as in the Lord's Prayer – "Our Father which art in heaven.";
- Jacob "hallows" (makes holy) Yahweh's name in the process;
- He mentions that God's will had been done by him returning to the Land as instructed;
- He acknowledges Divine blessings and acknowledges his unworthiness of them;
- He prays for deliverance from evil and confesses his worst fears;
- He finally leans heavily on the promises of God to be fulfilled.

Jacob's prayer is a model for all the servants of God in all ages and is formative and predictive of the framework of the Lord's Prayer.

So why is this so important to us? This is addressed in the next section.

e. What can we personally learn from the Patriarch's prayers?

Scripture comments eloquently about the relevance to us of Jacob's experience over 40 years from Bethel (Gen. 28) to Bethel for the second time (Gen. 35) which reached its apex at Jabbok culminating in the change of his name. The commentary of Hos. 12:3-6 makes it clear that in all Jacob's experiences in that period God was actually speaking to us.

The name Israel consists of two Hebrew words - *sarah* – to prevail; and *El* – might, power; hence Young's - "Ruling with God", and Strong's - "He will rule God". Its meaning is explained in Hosea.

Hosea 12:3-6

V.3 – "had power" – *sarah* – to prevail (as a prince). Ygs. Lit. – "by his strength he was a prince with God".

V.4 – "power over the angel" – *suwr* – to vanquish; to rule. Ygs. Lit. – "Yea he is a prince unto the messenger". Hence, Jacob "ruled over God" = 'Israel'. Proof that there is commentary on the meaning of the name Israel is found in Hos. 11:12 – "but Judah yet ruleth with God (El)". Hosea prophesied in "the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." Hos. 11:12 clearly refers to king Hezekiah who in the distress of the Assyrian invasion fell grievously sick and was told by Isaiah on behalf of Yahweh that he would die. There was no successor to David's throne as Hezekiah had not married. Never had there been a greater crisis for the line of David and the promises God had made to him.

In his distress Hezekiah turned to the wall and prayed earnestly with weeping – 2 Kings 20:2-3 – **"I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore."**

Isaiah was immediately turned around to inform Hezekiah that Yahweh had changed His mind and would grant an extension of life of 15 years to the king. It was in this way that Judah yet ruled with

God. This was not the first time in history that God had changed His intentions after supplication poured out with tears was made by His faithful servants. Moses was able to convince Yahweh to change His intention to destroy Israel on a number of occasions – Ex. 34:8-10; Num. 14:11-20.

The lesson is simple yet profound. Jacob could have been flicked off by the angel who wrestled with him; indeed the angel touched his thigh and his hip was dislocated. Yet God allowed Jacob to hold on to the dawning of a new day and receive the blessing of deliverance. He prevailed over the angel only by weeping and supplication, not by human strength. The lesson had been learnt to trust in Yahweh, not in one's own strength and determination. Men can prevail with God by genuinely earnest prayer because it is not in His character to turn His face away from such.

“he found him in Bethel” – Refers to the second visit to Bethel – Gen. 35:9-15.

“there he spake with us” – The lesson is for us!

V.6 – Roth. - “Thou therefore by thy God shalt return”. Ygs. Lit. - “And thou through thy God, dost turn”. RSV – “So you by the help of thy God, return”.

“mercy” – *chesed* – loving-kindness - Ex. 34:6.

“judgment” – *mishpat* – justice. Divine ethics and characteristics.

“wait” – *qavah* – to bind together (perhaps by twisting). Echoes of Jacob's wrestling!

“continually” – *tamiyd* – constant; in perpetuity.

The servants of God should take courage from this insight into the life and experience of Jacob. Genuine prayer is never ignored by Yahweh our Father.

Day 3. Prayer in the times of the Kingdom of Israel

a. Hannah's prayer of grief – 1 Sam. 1:9-13

1 Sam. 1:10 – And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

As in the case of Jacob at Jabbok, weeping and supplication were present expressing the deep-seated grief of Hannah. This grief had two sources. Firstly, it was a curse in Israel for a wife to be unable to produce a seed to perpetuate her husband's inheritance. Hannah's barrenness was one thing, but the persecution she suffered evidently from her husband's other fertile wife made her life unbearable.

Like Jacob also, Hannah includes in her emotional prayer a vow to Yahweh.

1 Sam. 1:11 – And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

This emphasises a key element of prayer. It is not only the means of communication with our God, but is both a refuge for the oppressed in times of trouble, and a forum for focusing on future commitment and service. It was not self-interest that motivated Hannah but rather a desire to be granted the opportunity to contribute to the development of spirituality in Israel. The outcome of her prayer is well known. The contribution of her divinely provided Nazarite son, Samuel, was second to none in the history of Israel in the period before kings ruled.

b. Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving – 1 Sam. 2:1-10

Hannah's astonishingly prescient prayer on presenting Samuel to Tabernacle service represents the fruit of her earlier prayer in the Tabernacle precinct. Samuel was probably 3 years old at this time – suggested by the age of the bullock offered – 1 Sam. 1:24 – “a bullock of three years old” (Roth.). Whereas sorrow attended Hannah's first recorded prayer, it was praise and thanksgiving that dominated this occasion.

1 Sam. 2:1-10 – And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

Hannah's prayer became the framework and source for Mary's prayer of thanksgiving in Luke 1:46-55. Its basic sentiments are invoked in the structure of the Lord's Prayer as well.

c. Asa's prayer of trust in the face of overwhelming odds – 2 Chron. 14:11

Asa was Judah's greatest reformer. Never again did the people of Judah reach such heights of universal commitment and dedication as they did in the 15th year of his reign. This came on the back of a remarkable victory over Zerah the Ethiopian who had amassed an army of one million men and sought to overrun Judah. Asa's reign was marked by diligent reform after the laxity and apostasy of Rehoboam's reign. His reward was peace from Yahweh for 10 years. But faith and commitment is always tested in time. The arrival of Zerah (“the rising of light”) provided that test. Asa had built a huge army in Judah of 580,000, but Zerah's host was almost double in size.

A latter day equivalent challenge to the Brotherhood has been the rise of Humanism with its overwhelming ‘army’ of those impacted by the three unclean spirits of the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality and Fraternity (Rev. 16:13-14). The only way to handle such a challenge is to lean heavily on Yahweh which Asa did in his prayer.

2 Chron. 14:11 – And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

This prayer introduces an element that will be seen time and again in the period of the kings who were faithful. It is the call for Yahweh not to allow His glory to be besmirched by human challenge (Isa. 42:8). This had been at the core of Moses' appeals to his God on behalf of wayward Israel.

d. Elijah's earnest prayers – rejected and accepted – 1 Kings 18:36-38; 19:10 (Rom. 11:2-4); James 5:16-18

The example of Elijah teaches some very important lessons about the nature of prayer. James refers to the effectiveness of two prayers three and half years apart.

James 5:16-18 – The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it

might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

These earnest prayers of Elijah were answered positively and immediately because they were in complete harmony with God's purpose and His desire to restore Israel to faithfulness. However, his prayer on Mt Horeb is rejected by Yahweh.

1 Kings 19:10 – And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

Reading these words does not reveal exactly what was behind Elijah's prayer. However, Paul cites 1 Kings 19 in Romans 11 and hints at the motivation behind Elijah's words. Elijah regarded himself as a failure in the mission to redeem Israel, and saw himself as the only one pursuing the pure worship of Yahweh. He is essentially suggesting that God should destroy Israel because of their apostasy, but is rebuffed by Yahweh telling him he was just one of the covenant family (the typical meaning of seven thousand) that had been preserved from idolatry. Elijah is criticised for running away from the opportunity to rid Israel of Jezebel and introduce a campaign of education to God's covenant people. That work was left to Elisha.

Rom. 11:2-4 – Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

The essential lesson here is that the content of our prayers must be in conformity with the will of God (1 John 5:14-15). Prayer involving our personal interests and concerns to the exclusion of the Divine plan and purpose will not prosper.

e. Jehoshaphat's prayer of faith for deliverance – 2 Chron. 20:5-12

Jehoshaphat king of Judah was one of the greatest spiritual educators in their history. His early reign was marked by deliberate and planned campaigns of education in opposition to those of Ahab and Jezebel in the northern kingdom of Israel. For this, he and his people were greatly blessed. However, a fateful marriage alliance with Ahab and Jezebel undid much of his achievements and led to the decimation of his massive army and dangerous exposure to the threats of previously subject neighbouring nations. It was during this crisis that Jehoshaphat's true character was revealed and his prayer of faith for deliverance from the armies amassed on his borders was delivered.

2 Chron. 20:5-12 – And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might

against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

The structure of Jehoshaphat's prayer before the assembled nation (v.13) prefigures the pattern of the early clauses of the Lord's Prayer. Firstly, there is reference to their "Father in heaven" and His rulership over the kingdom of men, then the remainder of what is recorded of the prayer focuses on the will of God being done. This will had resulted in:

- The deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt;
- The land being given to Israel under Joshua in fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham;
- Israel not attacking Moab, Ammon and Edom when entering the Land.

Jehoshaphat's appeal for deliverance is based on the ingratitude of Moab, Ammon and Edom who now threaten to overrun Judah.

This incident in the life of Jehoshaphat and its amazing outcome is far-reaching. It prefigures events of the latter days and Armageddon. The battle was won without a weapon being lifted as Judah's enemies destroyed each other – 2 Chron. 20:22-24; cp. Ezek. 38:21. Judah's secret weapon was absolute trust in Yahweh who instructed them to go to battle with praise on their lips. Led by singers they marched into battle singing the praises of their God who intervened to destroy their enemies. The lessons for the subject of prayer are obvious:

- Praise to Yahweh is at the forefront;
- The will of God determines every action;
- Confession of weakness and utter dependence on Yahweh undergirds the request.

f. Hezekiah's prayers to Yahweh in crisis – 2 Kings 19:15-19; 20:1-6

Hezekiah's reign contains the only recorded use of the silver trumpets Moses was commanded to make in the wilderness:

Num 10:1-2 – And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.

Silver is a symbol in Scripture for redemption. The silver trumpets were used for various purposes. This included calling the nation together for special occasions and Hezekiah did that when he rededicated the Temple and the people in the first month of his reign – 2 Chron. 29:27.

In Chronicles (2 Chron. 29:27), it is recorded that the penetrating, dominating, commanding note of the silver trumpets "began the song of Yahweh." It symbolised petition, and praise, and was used in war and worship. The sounding trumpets were a call to Yahweh for help in war (Num. 10:9; 3:16), or of praise in worship (Num. 10:10). The *chatsotserah* (trumpets), as was suitable for that which symbolised prayer, brought the assembly before Yahweh (Num. 10:3), guided them in their wilderness wanderings (v.5), caused them to be remembered by Yahweh (v.9), ensured relief from oppression, and suitably presented the various aspects of Israel's worship before Him as a memorial (v.10). Their vibrant, penetrating sound taught that prayer should be clear, fervent, determinate, like the clear, dominant, insistent sound of the silver trumpets in the Temple worship (cp. James 5:16; Phil. 4:6; 2 Chron. 13:10). – Making Prayer Powerful pg. 45

The silver trumpets were also used to call the nation together for war – **Num. 10:9 – "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow**

an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.”

Hezekiah could not have known that his use of the silver trumpets on such an encouraging occasion as the opening of the Temple for worship would culminate 14 years later in their use to call the nation together for war. When that crisis struck redemption from both national and personal disaster was required. Prayer was the answer.

Reference was made to Hezekiah's desperate prayer after Isaiah informed him that he would die from his sickness (2 Kings 20:1-6) in the notes for Day 2, Section (e), but his carefully considered prayer on receiving Sennacherib's blasphemous letter follows the same pattern as the prayer of Jehoshaphat.

2 Kings 19:15-19 – And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

However, whereas Jehoshaphat had the nation largely behind him, Hezekiah's situation was completely different:

Consider the example of Hezekiah at such a time. Jerusalem was threatened by Rabshakeh at the head of the victorious Assyrian army, noted for its ruthless brutality. Within the city, counsels were divided. Some urged upon Hezekiah to seek the help of Egypt; others suggested capitulating to Assyria; a section of the community, in the madness of despair, gave themselves over to debauchery and licence, saying "let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." They had not faith in Yahweh, Hezekiah or themselves. – Making Prayer Powerful pg. 56

The example of Hezekiah is revealed in extreme circumstances. In a time of duress and division which was to be made far worse when he was struck down by a sickness unto death, he maintained his faith and trust in Yahweh, so it was said of him – 2 Kings 18:5 – **“He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.”**

g. What vital lessons do we learn from prayers in the days of the kings?

Notice, that in all these prayers of defence, the issues are plainly stated, others are drawn into the scope of the prayer, and specific requests are made. There is nothing vague in the words used; no vain repetition. – Making Prayer Powerful pg. 45

Day 4. Prayer in the First Century

a. Thanksgiving for answered prayers – Luke 1:13-14, 67-79; 2:25-32

One prayer in particular had clearly been repeated by Zacharias and Elizabeth for many years, namely, a request to be relieved of the curse of being unable to perpetuate his father's house through the birth of a son. The reference to the genealogy of both suggests this objective was at the heart of their entreaties – **Luke 1:5 – “a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia (Abijah – 1 Chron. 24:10): and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.”** However, the birth of John the Baptist was not about perpetuation of the

Aaronic priesthood but rather its replacement – the Melchizedek priesthood of the Son of God. John was to be the forerunner of Jesus Anointed.

The prayer of praise recorded in Luke 1:67-79 uttered once Zacharias was able to speak after the naming of John highlights his understanding that his son would be the forerunner of the greater than Melchizedek. His reference to the Abrahamic Covenant and “righteousness and holiness” coupled with the use of the Divine title “Highest” are all redolent of Melchizedek. “Highest” is the translation of *hupsistos* which is the New Testament equivalent of *elyon* rendered “Most High” four times in Gen. 14.

Similarly, the answered prayers of Simeon to see the Messiah before his death produced another marvellous prayer in which the oath Yahweh made to His son “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4) feature prominently. Yahweh’s salvation (Yahshua = Jesus) was born to redeem “all people”, and would be a light to the Gentiles (Gen. 49:6). This is what David understood was the key element of the type of Melchizedek. Simeon too understood it.

Luke 2:28-32 – Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

b. The need for belief in prayer – Matt. 21:22; Acts 12:5-16; Mark 11:22-26

Matt. 21:22 – And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

The Lord’s promise was tested in the persecution of the ecclesia recorded in Acts 12. At Passover time Herod killed James, one of the sons of thunder, and then incarcerated Peter with a view to ingratiating himself with the Jews after Passover. The ecclesia in Jerusalem gathered in safe houses to pray earnestly for deliverance at Passover, recalling the principles of the nation’s redemption from the bondage of Egypt. The situation was ripe for Divine intervention and this is what the ecclesia was seeking.

Acts 12:5 – Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the ecclesia unto God for him.

Just as in Exodus 12, the redeeming angel arrives during the night; overpowers the best that the oppressors can offer, and releases the prisoner in a spectacular manner. Passover was relived as Peter was commanded like Israel to arise with “loins girded, your shoes on your feet” (Ex. 12:11; cp. Acts 12:8).

On arrival at the house of John Mark’s mother where many of the brethren had gathered, Peter has great difficulty convincing Rhoda at the door that he had been released. Once she recognised his voice, instead of opening the door she returned to convince those inside that their prayers had been answered. She found this very difficult. First they said she was “mad”, but when she insisted it was so, they said it must be his angel (did they mean an immortal angel or his messenger?). Angels do not need to knock persistently on the door, so eventually the door is opened to reveal Peter free from Herod’s control. However, the Passover angel was not finished. Like Pharaoh before him who plunged into the divided Red Sea, Herod, filled with pride arrogated divinity to himself and was struck down by the angel (Acts 12:23).

The lesson of this series of events is obvious – there is a need for belief in prayer, especially when the circumstances involve the larger purpose of God.

c. The importance of prayer in the triumph of Christ – Luke 6:12; 22:40-46; John 11:41-42; 17:1-26

Fervent and consistent prayer is the hallmark of a strong and vibrant relationship with God. Herein lay the secret of Christ's triumph over the nature that brings all other children of Adam to sin and humiliation. Having just been threatened with death in a synagogue we read:

Luke 6:12 – And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

At the height of the trial in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord resorted to earnest prayer:

Luke 22:40-41 – And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.

At the resurrection of Lazarus the Lord made a public declaration of his relationship with his Father that would be the guarantee of his own resurrection:

John 11:41-42 – Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

The Lord's astonishing prayer in the prelude to his arrest in Gethsemane is full of the core issues of salvation and is far-reaching in its purpose. It was not only about his own relationship with the Father as the key to his success, but the oneness he shared with his disciples, and ultimately those who would be converted by their teachings.

John 17:20 – Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

The oneness Christ shared with his Father was unique but not exclusive. Those who were at one with him in mind and purpose could share in it now, and through him in the future obtain perfection – a perfect oneness with God and Christ.

d. The power and importance of prayer in the development of the early ecclesia – Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4

Christ's disciples had learnt from their Master. The 120 who gathered in the upper room followed his example and his advice to operate with one mind:

Acts 1:14 – These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Prayer preceded their counsels to replace Judas Iscariot and once they had consolidated the practices of the new found ecclesial body, among the four primary foundations of ecclesial life was prayer.

Acts 2:42 – And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The rituals of the Law and Jewish culture continued to influence life in the ecclesia for many years. One of these practices was "the hour of prayer". There were three times during the day when religious Jews prayed - **Ps. 55:17 – "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."** Daniel followed this practice (Dan. 6:10). The evening prayer ("between the evenings") took place at the time of the evening sacrifice (Ps. 141:2) and was an ideal time for prayer, being the time that Christ died on the tree. Peter and John used this time of the day as an opportunity to pray in Jerusalem:

Acts 3:1 – Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

So important was prayer in the development of the new ecclesia in Jerusalem with its thousands of members who shared all things in common that seven brethren were appointed to handle a range of administrative functions so that the Apostles could focus on it and the study of the Word:

Acts 6:4 – But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

e. The risen and glorified Christ as mediator between God and men – How should we use his name in prayer?

Apostate Christendom universally believes in the doctrine of the Trinity. Trinitarian doctrine states inter-alia – “So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods: but one God.” Accordingly, orthodox Christians believe that God and Christ are one and the same. Their prayers to God are consequently in fact prayers to Christ. To them Jesus is God. It is not surprising therefore that there is failure in their prayers to clearly distinguish between Yahweh as the Supreme Being and the ultimate saviour and Jesus Christ as mediator, and to get their titles right. Additionally, the evangelical approach to religion spawned by Pentecostal communities has brought Jesus Christ down to a very human level despite his exaltation to the right hand of God as mediator between God and man. Hence, prayers are not only addressed to Christ instead of Yahweh, but the name Jesus is used almost exclusively. Is this correct?

Christ's full name is: The Lord Jesus Christ. He attained the titles attached to his name on his resurrection. In preaching to the Jews, Peter declared: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). It is pleasing to hear the full name and titles of the Lord used in prayer. Jesus signifies Yah shall save, and proclaims his mission as Saviour. Christ is the Greek form of Anointed, and implies the wonderful unity between him and the Father, by which he was enabled to overcome, and through which he was clothed upon with Divine nature. Lord is master or owner. It states his pre-eminence over the Ecclesia. The prayer that uses the full name and titles of the Lord acknowledges the full measure of his mission, his unity with the Father, and his status over the Ecclesia. Paul recommended that prayers be offered "unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). We cannot improve on that manner of approach. – Making Prayer Powerful pg. 40 - HP Mansfield

f. Why is it important to pray to God through Christ?

There has been a trend in the latter days to assert that prayers can be addressed to Christ himself rather than to the Father through him. Is this approach supported by Scripture? The following extract makes the matter very clear:

As the incense was ignited by coals of fire from the altar of sacrifice (Exod. 30:9), causing the fragrant odour to ascend, so our prayers should be touched with the sacrifice of Christ. They should be offered **in his name**, though addressed to the Father. He, himself, instructed that this should be done: “Whatsoever ye shall ask **in my name**, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything **in my name** I will do it” (John 14:13-14). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father **in my name**, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing **in my name**: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-24).

Prayer, therefore, should be addressed to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul taught: “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” We should combine the Father and the Son in our prayers. It is as wrong to address the Father without the Son, as it is to address the Son without the Father (John 5:23).

There is a glorious unity between the Father and the Son that should not be sundered by worshippers on earth. – Making Prayer Powerful pg. 35 - HP Mansfield

g. The power of prayer in the life of the Apostle Paul – Acts 16:13,16 (leads to conversion); 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 3:14-21; 6:18-20; Phil. 1:3-5,9; 2 Thess. 3:1-2

The conversion of Lydia resulted from Paul and his companions seeking a quiet place for prayer near Philippi (Acts 16:13), and the healing of the demented girl from another visit to the same place (Acts 16:16).

Passing through severe trials, Paul sought the prayers of the brethren on his behalf and when help came asked them to offer thanks in prayer:

2 Cor. 1:11 – Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Paul combines prayer, principle and teaching in **Eph. 3:14-21**. He opens and concludes this section with the words of a prayer – **Eph. 3:14 – For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. His concluding words emphasise a critically important issue in regard to prayer, namely, conviction that it is in the power of the Father **“to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”** (v.20).

Paul further emphasised how important prayer was in the furtherance of his mission in **Eph. 6:18-20**:

Eph. 6:18 – Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

The Apostle was also careful to repeat his requests and thanksgiving for those whom he had converted and now supported:

Phil. 1:3-5 – I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

Also requesting in those prayers their growth and development in the Truth – **Phil. 1:9 – And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.**

Much opposition, obstruction and persecution was encountered by Paul in the discharge of his mission, so he asked others to pray for the work and for the Word. Not all that Paul preached to had faith, but the faithful prayers of those who did could make all the difference:

2 Thess. 3:1-2 – Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

h. The importance of prayer as a time of judgement looms – 1 Pet. 4:7; Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33; Luke 17:26-18:8; Luke 21:36

1 Pet. 4:7 – But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Consistently resorting to prayer as the day of destiny draws near is Peter's sound advice. He heard this advice himself from Christ in the garden – Luke 22:40-41, Matt. 26:41.

Matt. 26:41 – Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

The distractions of the modern world are increasing more and more every day through breathtaking developments in technology and easy access to media of every kind. The following extract is very relevant to our times:

Sporadic prayer is not sufficient for the urgent and returning needs of today. The tendency to evil is with us always, and if we are not to succumb repeatedly to its power, God must always be with us too. Prayer and evil cannot live together; if one is present, the other must die.we must so order our life that we are constantly in touch with God throughout our waking hours. – Prayer - Studies in Principles and Practice, pg. 62

While “the times and seasons” are obvious to any intelligent reader of Bible prophecy, we do not know the day nor the hour that Christ will return, leave alone the hour that death may overtake us, so prayer is a key element in maintaining a spirit of readiness:

Mark 13:33 – Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Christ made it very clear that his servants who were alive at his return would be removed to judgement from a time of general prosperity. This is the obvious message of **Luke 17:26-37**. The selection of the days of Noah and Lot (two periods of Divine judgement) is deliberate. No mention is made by the Lord of the violence and immorality that characterised those times, although we see it manifested in the world today. The reason for this is obvious from the Lord’s warning in verse 32 - **“Remember Lot’s wife”**. Such a warning would be meaningless to a generation suffering hardship and privation. The challenge of the latter days would be widespread prosperity of a kind rarely (if ever) seen in history. **Luke 21:34** also hints at prosperity being an issue at the Lord’s return.

That prosperity would be the pressing issue for Christ’s servants at his return is also clearly shown by the Lord’s letter to the Laodicean Ecclesia in **Rev. 3:14-22**. As brethren John Thomas and HP Mansfield have shown in their writings on the Apocalypse, each of the letters to the seven ecclesias of Asia covers a historic period from the time of the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos (circa AD 96) to the return of Christ. The letter to the Laodiceans being the last of the seven is the only one to have in it the words, **“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock”** (v.20). This shows unequivocally that its prophetic import pointed to the Second Advent of Christ. The problem of the Laodiceans was apathy and lukewarmness due to rampant prosperity:

Rev. 3:17 – Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.

The days of Noah and the days of Lot, like “the days of the Son of man”, were days of opportunity for God’s servants that few responded to. Five times Christ uses “days” in the plural in this discourse from **Luke 17:20-37**, and five times he uses the singular “day” as it refers to the day of destiny. Five is the number of Divine grace (John 5:2). Used wisely, days of opportunity will lead to God’s grace in the day of destiny. However, a significant change occurs when Christ mentions the night of the removal of his servants to judgement:

Luke 17:34 – I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

Having mentioned Lot’s wife and the principle of verse 33 – **“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it”**, it is obvious why the Lord changes to ‘night’. He wants his hearers to go back to the record of the arrival of two angels (one for each responsible person in Lot’s house) in Gen. 19:1. They came in the evening, the most likely time when the angels will arrive to collect the responsible in the latter days. All the responsible will be taken to judgement, so what does he mean when he says “the one shall be taken and the other left”?

The Greek word translated “taken” is *paralambano* – to receive near; i.e. associate with oneself (speaks of an intimate relationship); used of taking a wife to oneself – Matt. 1:20,24, while the word for “left” is *aphiemi* – to send forth, to leave, depart from, abandon (used of separation in marriage – 1 Cor. 7:11,12,13). Hence, Lot (and the faithful he represents) will go to Christ’s right hand and be received into the marriage of the Lamb to his bride, while Lot’s wife (and the unready and unfaithful she represents) will go to Christ’s left and be dismissed from the marriage. When asked “Where Lord?” in verse 37, the disciples are clearly asking where the rejected are left. Christ’s answer while based on the impending events of AD 70 suggests the principle involved. The rejected are ‘left’ in the place they choose just like Lot’s wife turned to a pillar of salt near Sodom which she did not want to leave.

This powerful exhortation and warning is the source for the following parable of the unjust judge and the oppressed widow of **Luke 18:1-8**. In this parable Christ provides the antidote to the days of Lot as noted by Bro. John Carter in his book “Parables of the Messiah” page 252:

“The background of the parable is the idea of a time of waiting, of apparent delay, which would be perplexing to men of faith in every age. The conditions of the world would be conducive to disappointment and despair, when disciples might lose hope in his coming again. Jesus therefore prescribes the antidote to counteract the effects upon the disciples of the conditions prevailing around them. Men must pray - must keep in touch with God....” “Prayer, earnest and continual ‘in faith expressed’, keeps the mind fixed on divine things.....”

Luke 18:1 – “And he spake a parable” – In the Greek the preposition *kai* (“and”) occurs after the word “spake”. Lit. “And he spake also a parable”; i.e. the parable was to reinforce the previous words.

“to this end” – *pros* – toward (this end).

“that men ought” – Delete the word “men”. The Grk. *dein* = it is necessary.

“always” – *pantote* – at all times, constantly, consistently.

“to faint” – *ekakeo* – to lose one’s courage, to lose heart, be faint-hearted.

V.2 – “There was in a city a judge” – Lit. “in a certain city a certain judge”.

“feared” – *phobeo* – to frighten; to be in awe of; revere. May be reference to a Roman judge – a godless pagan.

“regarded” – *entrepo* – respect.

V.3 – “a widow” – Exact opposite to judge - a pathetic, totally dependent figure; often oppressed by the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:14; Luke 20:47).

“and she came” – Lit. “and she was coming”; i.e. continually and repeatedly.

“Avenge” – *ekdiako* – vindicate, retaliate.

“adversary” – *antidikos* – opponent at law.

V.4 – “he said within himself” – In contrast to his proud boast V.2.

V.5 – “troubleth” – *kopos* – a cut; wear out with toil; hence to cause one trouble.

“continual coming” – *eis telos* – Lit. – “unto the end”. Roth. – “persistently coming”.

“weary” – *hupopiazoo* – to hit under the eye; buffet, beat and bruise. Only other occurrence is 1 Cor. 9:27 (“keep under”).

V.6 – “And the Lord said” – A distinct pause – time for lesson to sink in.

“unjust” – *adikias* – unrighteous.

V.7 – “not” – *ou me* – intense negation in Greek.

“avenge” – Lit. – “shall execute the avenging”.

“elect” – *eklektos* – chosen ones (Roth.).

“though he bear long with them” – *makrothumeo* – long-spirited; i.e. forbearing. God delays only to fulfil His predetermined plan.

V.8 – “the Son of man” – Title of Christ as judge in the exercise of dominion over all carnal things (John 5:22,27).

“shall he find faith” – The definite article is present but the AV translation gives the correct sense. Lit. – “shall he find this faith”; i.e. the kind of faith displayed by the widow of the parable. Christ will find faithful believers when he returns – see Ezek. 47:22-23, Rev. 16:15; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess. 4:17.

The simple message of the parable is that persistence and constancy (otherwise known as importunity) in prayer is absolutely essential to overcome in the days of Lot which are upon us. Bro. Carter comments – “We prevail with men by importunity because they are displeased with it, but with God because He is pleased with it.”

i. Prayers for the sick in body and mind – James 5:14-16; 1 John 5:16

The words of James are often discussed as to whether they have relevance today for the healing of the sick.

James 5:14 – Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the ecclesia; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

James wrote early in the history of the 1st century ecclesia and primarily to Jews of the Diaspora (James 1:1). It was the time when the spirit gifts were available among ecclesias and miracles of healing were not uncommon – Acts 19:11-12. Anointing the sick with oil was a Jewish practice – Mark 6:13. It was largely unknown among Gentiles. The nexus between healing and forgiveness of sins had been established by Christ (Mark 2:5), and his disciples followed his example both healing (Luke 10:17) and forgiving sins (John 20:23). That era passed with the death of the Apostles and the cessation of the operation of the spirit gifts.

Today, prayer is made for those that are sick but healing is entirely in the hands of the Father and according to His will. Forgiveness of sin is dependent on confession and repentance – **Proverbs 28:13 – He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.** Prayer for the forgiveness of others has always been allowable but is dependent on this principle. Moses prayed that Yahweh would forgive Israel on several occasions. His appeals in Ex. 33 and 34 were successful because the people acknowledged their guilt and humbled themselves (Ex. 33:10; 34:8-9), but his appeal in Ex. 32:31-33 was rejected because of the suggestion of substitution and no repentance on the part of the people. His appeal for forgiveness of the people in Num. 14:19-20 was dismissed because of persistent rebellion against the revealed glory of God and a complete lack of faith. Accordingly, the entire generation of folk 20 years and older were condemned to perish in the wilderness except for Caleb and Joshua and a handful of Levites. The principle of Prov. 28:13 held true.

Day 5. The Lord’s Prayer – A whole way of life

a. The structure and context of the Lord’s Prayer – Matt. 6:5-15 - David’s final public prayer as the basis for Christ’s.

The Lord’s Prayer has its roots in significant prayers of the Old Testament as considered previously. Perhaps the most important was David’s last recorded prayer on the occasion of Solomon’s second confirmation as king, and just prior to the record of his death.

1 Chron. 29:10-19 – Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

It is a useful exercise to use a highlighter to highlight phrases from David's prayer (above) that are clearly picked up in the structure of the Lord's Prayer.

Matt. 6:9 – After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Analysis of the Structure of the Lord's Prayer

Invocation of God – **“Our Father which art in heaven”**

Three petitions relating to God's glory:

- (a) **“Hallowed be thy name”;**
- (b) **“Thy kingdom come”;**
- (c) **“Thy will be done as it is in heaven”.**

Three petitions relating to man's needs –

- (a) **“Give us this day our daily bread”;**
- (b) **“And forgive us our debts...”;**
- (c) **“And lead us not into temptation...”**

Concluding praise of God – **“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”**

b. Avoiding meaningless repetition and high sounding words

The simple uncomplicated phrases that comprise the Lord's Prayer are a means of teaching that high sounding words and hackneyed phrases need to be avoided. Prayer is not about impressing either God or men with semantics and vocabulary. What is crucial are sentiments that demonstrate faithful intent and sincerity. It was the practice in the time of Christ for public prayers, after the

practice of pagans to be wordy, lengthy, and repetitive, and designed for public consumption, not the ears of Yahweh the living God:

Matt. 6:7 – But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

The reference may well be to the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:26-29.

c. The danger of failing to forgive when praying for forgiveness

The only element of the Lord's Prayer that receives special treatment after its delivery is the matter of forgiving from the heart those who have trespassed against us if we wish to be forgiven our sins against God.

Matt. 6:14-15 – For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

d. Why pray for enemies? – Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; 23:34; Acts 7:60

The principle of forgiving to be forgiven undergirds the Lord's teaching to pray for our enemies. Yahweh seeks the salvation of all men and so makes **“His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”** (Matt. 5:45). It was on this basis that Christ taught:

Matt. 5:44 – But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

All flesh is grass and all in Adam must die (even the sinless Jesus Anointed) to declare the righteousness of God – Isa. 40:6-8; Matt. 3:15; 1 Cor. 15:22. God owes mortal man nothing, but desires that none should perish – 2 Pet. 3:9. For this reason He sent His son - John 3:16. Jesus Christ showed the way by submitting to mistreatment and persecution, and praying for those who hated him – all in the hope that they might see the error of their ways and repent. Most didn't, but some did. It was all about saving the lives of others by giving up one's own life.

e. Prayer as a whole way of life – Luke 11:1-36

Presentation of the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11 is different to Matt. 6 and this is for a purpose. Whereas in Matt. 6 the model prayer has 10 clauses, in Luke 11:2-4 it has seven. Why should this be so?

Seven, among other things, is the number in Scripture for the Spirit. In Eureka Vol. 3 (Logos Edition) page 206, Bro. Thomas wrote – But seven is the Divine Number of the Spirit; and, therefore, all these are numbered sevenfold; and the Spirit is symbolized by “seven horns and seven eyes,” as significant of omnipotence and omniscience.

It is a fascinating fact that each of the seven clauses matches the meaning of its number. The number 1 in Scripture stands for God and the certainty that His existence guarantees, hence, the first clause is about Yahweh our Father – God must always be first. The number 2 represents separation and division, hence, God's name is to be hallowed (Gr. *hagiazō* – to make holy). Three represents fruit, result or outcome, hence, the 3rd clause is about the coming of the Kingdom, the greatest of all outcomes. Four is the number for righteousness and God manifestation and the 4th clause concerns God's will being done on earth as it is performed in heaven. Five is the number of grace and the 5th clause concerns God's grace in the provision of daily bread. Six is the number of man and the 6th clause concerns man's greatest need – the forgiveness of sin. Seven is the Spirit

number (among other things) and the 7th clause concerns the way to overcome the power of sin by the Spirit Word of God.

The seven clauses of the prayer in Luke 11 are really about the prayer being a whole way of life “walking in the spirit” – Gal. 5:16, 25. This is contrasted by an empty life where “seven other spirits” more lawless than those originally cast out enter in (Luke 11:26) making “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet. 2:20). Spirit therefore in this context is about attitude of mind. The mind that is governed by the principles of the Lord’s Prayer produces a whole way of life acceptable to God. The context of Luke 11:5-36 expands upon each of the seven clauses of the prayer.

Firstly though, the Lord emphasises the need for persistence in prayer by the parable of the friend at midnight and its lessons (Luke 11:5-12). In this parable he shows that importunity trumps friendship.

Then from verse 13 to 36 there is expansion on each of the seven clauses of the prayer in order.

V.13 – “your heavenly Father” is clearly harking back to “Our Father which art in heaven.”

Diaglott – **“give a spirit holy to those asking him”** harks back to **“Hallowed be thy name.”** The principle here is **“Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (1 Pet. 1:16). The call to the Truth requires separation or **“holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Heb. 12:14).

In response to the blasphemous assertion that Christ cast out demons (sickness) by Beelzebub (the lord of the dung heap) he introduces the theme of the Kingdom (Luke 11:14-19), and then points to the Exodus and wilderness wanderings of Israel, saying:

Luke 11:20 – But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

This reference to the 3rd clause opens the way to refer to the 4th. The phrase “the finger of God” is rare in Scripture. It is cited from Ex. 8:19. The plague of lice could not be mimicked by the magicians of Egypt. They acknowledged this:

Ex. 8:19 – Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Thus the themes of the Exodus dominate what follows. Here is an interpretation (see brackets):

Luke 11:21-23 – When a strong man (Pharaoh) armed keepeth his palace (Egypt), his goods (Israel) are in peace: But when a stronger than he (Yahweh) shall come upon him (through the plagues), and overcome him (in the plagues, killing of the firstborn and the Red Sea), he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted (destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea), and divideth his spoils (Israel spoiled the Egyptians). He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

This last sentence is very curious. What does it have to do with the overall theme? Just as there could be no neutrality for Israel in their choice between Yahweh and Pharaoh, so men cannot take a position of neutrality in their service to God and Christ. There is no such thing as neutral angel standing in the presence of God. This is a reference to the 4th clause of the prayer – **“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”**

Luke 11:24 – When the unclean spirit (idolatry of Egypt) is gone out of a man (Israel, Yahweh's firstborn nation), he walketh through dry places (the wilderness of Sinai), seeking rest (the land promised to Abraham); and finding none (through lack of faith), he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out (Israel sought to return to Egypt).

In **Luke 11:27-28** Christ responds to a woman who lauded the blessedness of the mother who suckled him by pointing to his daily bread – the Word of God – **“for man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”** (Luke 4:4), so making reference to the 5th clause of the prayer – **“Give us day by day our daily bread”**:

Luke 11:28 – But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

In **Luke 11:29-32**, Christ rebukes his generation for seeking a sign but refusing to believe it when it was given, namely, the sign of Jonah. The introduction of Jonah is significant because Jonah refused to forgive the Ninevites when Yahweh had. The Lord is harking back to the 6th clause of the prayer – **“And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.”**

Then finally in **Luke 11:33-36**, the Lord refers to the 7th clause of the prayer – **“And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”**

The Word of God is the source of light (Ps. 119:105,130; Isa. 8:20). Once it has entered it must be seen in action – **James 1:22** – “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” Hence, it must not be hidden.

The eye is the symbol for intelligence because it is the mechanism to bring the images of light to the brain for ‘enlightenment’. If it has one source, namely the Word of God, the outcome will be a singly motivated life, but if it is adulterated and corrupted the outcome will be quite different. This is the way we can be delivered from evil.

Luke 11:34-36 – The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

f. The nexus between Bible study and prayers of dependence – Isa. 50:4-10

We began this study by reference to two way communication between God and man. The supreme example of this of course is the relationship between God and Christ. From his earliest days the Father woke His son with the voice of education:

Isa. 50:4 – The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

The Hebrew word rendered “learned” twice in this verse is *limmud* signifying instructed. It is used only 6 times in the O.T. and is translated “disciples” in Isa. 8:16. There was never a disciple quite like Christ. As the son of God he had an ability to absorb and assimilate Divine teaching and principles far beyond any son of Adam. This was the key to his triumph over sin.

In Isa. 50:5-10 we read of the outcome of this daily education. In v.5 he hearkened and was not rebellious. In v.6 he was prepared to endure every indignity to fulfil the will of God. In v.7 he was confident of God’s help and set his course with determination. In v.8 he was confident his relationship with his father would secure victory over his adversaries. In v.9 he knew others would perish in their sin but that he would be redeemed. And in v.10 he knew his example would have an effect for good eternally on others who hearkened to his teaching and followed his example.

g. Practical steps we can take – How can we improve our prayers in the future in terms of frequency, content and focus?

The first thing to recognise is that we live in a different environment to our brethren of the past. While there have been times when prosperity has challenged God's people such as the days of Noah and Lot, it is modern technology, especially the Internet, that has created a unique era in the history of humanity. This recent development has brought enormous pressure on the Brotherhood. One of the things that suffers in this pressure cooker environment is regular and well conceived prayer. What practical steps can we take to meet this modern challenge?

The following extract was quoted on page but is worth repeating in this context:

Sporadic prayer is not sufficient for the urgent and returning needs of today. The tendency to evil is with us always, and if we are not to succumb repeatedly to its power, God must always be with us too. **Prayer and evil cannot live together; if one is present, the other must die.**we must so order our life that we are constantly in touch with God throughout our waking hours. – Prayer - Studies in Principles and Practice, pg. 62

Some suggestions:

- Start by ensuring this study becomes a memorable milestone in our personal spiritual development. Recognition of deficiency that results from deeper understanding of what is required and what is possible creates milestone moments in life not easily forgotten.
- Adopt the practice of Daniel by setting aside time first thing in the morning, in the middle of the day, and at the end of the day for well considered prayer.
- For considered prayers, give some thought to what is to be included. This may mean making a mental or written list well beforehand.
- For other times during the day when matters of importance or periods of temptation arrive, use the practice of Nehemiah of brief instant prayer in the mind to handle situations that arise.
- Confer with your close friends who like you will struggle at times with prayer. Even Christ looked to his friends for support in prayer when times were tough.
- Use the breaking of bread self-examination period, if not every day, to assess the quality of your relationship with the Father of which prayer is a major touchstone.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” – Phil. 4:6

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” – Matt. 26:41

“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” – 1 Tim. 2:8

“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.” – James 5:13

“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” – Mark 11:24

“Finally, brethren, pray for us.” – 2 Thess. 3:1