



God's Resources for Life and Healing

Part 4B: Prayer

In our last issue we started looking at the divine resource of prayer, which opens a direct line of communication to God Himself and is a key component for living the extraordinary life Jesus promised us in John 10:10. We particularly examined what it means to pray in Jesus' name, the first requirement for effective prayer given in John 14:13. This verse also states the desire of the Son to bring glory to God in the prayers that He answers. Therefore, if we want to see positive results from our prayers, we do well to understand what kinds of requests are most apt to bring glory to God.

In the immediate context of this verse, Jesus had just talked about His disciples doing the works that He Himself had done on earth. While these were many, Jesus specifically declared in Luke 4:18-19 that He had been anointed "to preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Certainly God is glorified in answering prayers to enhance our continuation of Jesus' own ministry to the lost, the downtrodden, the afflicted, and the oppressed, recognizing that Jesus' intent in all of these instances was to bring the person into the full benefits of the Kingdom of God.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 confirms this and broadens the scope of what brings glory to God to include the fulfilling of our calling and the empowering of every desire of ours for goodness and every work that is based on faith. This, again, aligns us with what Jesus Himself would do if He were still on earth, and we can expect God to answer prayers to work with us in these areas.

According to Philippians 1:9-11, God is also glorified when we ourselves grow in love, knowledge, discernment, and the manifestation of Christ's righteousness in our lives. Therefore, we can also confidently expect God to answer sincere prayers for our own growth in sanctification and spiritual maturity as well as the understanding of His Word. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-21 indicates that we can request this for others as well, even asking for supernatural wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment to enhance the process.

Going beyond the things that are definitely stated to bring glory to God, we can garner further insight into the kinds of prayers that God seems to honor by looking at the instructions He has given regarding prayer and the examples of godly prayer found in the Bible. These would seemingly indicate the appropriateness of prayer for daily food (Mat. 6:11), wisdom (James 1:5), healing (James 5:14-16), relief from troubling circumstances (Phil. 4:6-7; James 5:13; 1 Peter 5:7), protection (Neh. 4:6-9; Ezra 8:21-23; John 17:11-15), adversarial relationships (Ps. 6:6-10; Mat. 5:44; Luke 18:1-7), the welfare of one's country (Ps. 122:6; Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2), the gift of children (1 Sam. 1:1-20), and the right marriage partner (Gen. 24). How blessed we are to have a loving Father who invites us to come boldly before His throne with all of these needs that directly impact our personal lives (Heb. 4:15)!

When we bring such requests to God, however, we must keep some important factors in mind. First of all, we must always remember that God's perspective is infinitely broader than ours and His plans wiser (Isa. 55:8-9). Therefore, if He does not answer one of these requests as we would like, we must believe that He is acting true to His character and with our best welfare in mind. This too requires faith. Sometimes God allows difficult circumstances in our lives to increase our faith (2 Cor. 1:8-9) or to build our character (Rom. 5:3-4; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10; Heb. 2:10), viewing these goals as higher priorities.