

## INTRODUCTION

When we study the public prayers in the Bible we learn they are basically always Greek. You can pray the Lord’s Prayer (what we call the “model prayer”) in about 22 seconds. The prayer we are going to read from the apostle Paul only takes about 45 seconds to read. Sometimes people are prone to give long, rambling public prayers. I don’t particularly like those too much. I think sometimes people try to preach when they pray.

Dwight L. Moody, who was an evangelist about a century ago, didn’t like those kinds of prayers either. On some occasions at his big crusade meetings he was known to call on some local pastor to pray and if this pastor prayed on and on and on, right in the middle of his prayer, Dwight L. Moody would turn to his music man and say, “Brother Sankey, stand up and lead us in our music as this brother catches up on his prayer life.” And they would keep on going. However, private prayer is another thing. You do need to spend some time in private time. Jesus said, “Could you not watch and pray for one hour?” Public prayers are usually brief. Paul never prays for himself; he always prays for someone else. It is important to understand the power of prayer.

Ephesians 3:14-21. “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”

I believe just about everybody on the face of the earth who believes in some kind of God participates in the spiritual exercise of prayer. It’s talking to God and listening to God. There are all kind of strange prayers. I heard about a lady who had a parrot that she taught to be very spiritual and so the parrot would always say, “Awwwk! Let us pray. Let’s pray.” She met a guy who also was a bird lover, but had been a salty-mouthed sailor years before. He also had a parrot, but believe me that parrot didn’t say, “Let us pray.” In fact, he taught that parrot to say, “Awwwk! Let’s kiss.” As it would happen, these two got together and shared their interests in birds. One thing led to another and they ended up getting married. They set up household together and introduced these two parrots. The sweet, spiritual parrot said, “Let’s pray. Let’s pray.” The other parrot said, “Let’s kiss. Let’s kiss.” The first parrot said, “Praise God my prayers have been answered.”

## I. THE POSTURE OF PRAYER

If you want to know how to have your prayers answered, we learn from this prayer of the apostle, Paul, some tips on praying, and also we learn some things God wants to accomplish in our lives in this prayer. Notice three simple things about this prayer. Number one, notice the posture of the prayer. The apostle, Paul, says, “I kneel before the Father.” Remember the apostle

Paul was in prison chained to a Roman soldier, and he becomes so overcome with love for these Christians that as he is dictating he says to this soldier, "We have to get on our knees." Right there in that prison cell on the rough, stone floor, the apostle Paul gets on his knees and prays this prayer. There is something special about kneeling when you pray.

You don't have to kneel when you pray. In fact, in the Bible there are different postures for prayer. David sat before the Lord and prayed. Abraham stood before the Lord and prayed. Ezra bowed down and prostrated himself in prayer. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus cast himself down on his faith. There is no one correct posture for prayer but, there are many times when it is appropriate for us to kneel when we pray. In fact, there is disagreement about this. I heard about a group of four pastors and one old, wise layman who were discussing the different postures of prayer to see which was the right way to pray. That little discussion has been put into a little poem:

The proper way for a man to pray  
Said Pastor Lemuel Keyes  
And the only proper way  
Is down upon his knees.

No, I should say the way to pray  
Said Reverend Dr. Wise  
Is standing straight with outstretched arms  
With rapt and upturned eyes

Oh, no, no, no  
Said Reverend Snow  
Such posture is too proud  
A man should pray with eyes fast closed  
And head contritely bowed.

Well, it seems to me  
That his hands should be  
Austerely clasped in front  
With both thumbs  
Pointing to the ground  
Said the Reverend Dr. Blount.

Last year, I fell in Higgins' well  
Headfirst, said Cyrus Brown  
With my heels sticking up  
And my head pointing down.

I prayed a prayer  
The strongest prayer I've said  
Just stuck in a well that day  
Standing on my head!

*("The Prayer of Cyrus Brown" by Sam Walter Foss)*

Whether or not you are standing on your head or you are on your knees or you are on your face the position of your body is not nearly as important as the attitude of your heart. Sometimes, the attitude of your heart is demonstrated by your body language.

What if I said, "Okay, everybody go to your knees right now." I know some of you wouldn't think anything of it. You would say, "Sure." You're used to doing that and you would immediately go to your knees. Some of you would not do that for one reason or another. There may be many reasons why you wouldn't. You many not be physically able, and, of course, we would understand that but, there are some of you who kind have the attitude, "I don't bow my knee for anybody or anything!" If that is your attitude, it is a very dangerous spiritual attitude to have. At least you ought to be willing to bow your knees before God. Because kneeling or bowing demonstrates a couple of important things. I think this is why Paul knelt when he prayed.

## **1. Bowing demonstrates adoration**

Number one, bowing demonstrates adoration. When some of you fellows proposed to your girl, you got on one knee and asked, "Wilt thou?" And then you wilted when she said, "Yes." You loved her so much you were willing to bow your knee to propose to her. That was because you adored her; you loved her. That's one reason Paul was willing to bow his knee because he loved Jesus so much.

I pastored a little church in central Alabama when I was just out of seminary. There was a family in our church I will never forget, because they were such wonderful Christians. Ray Davis owned a clothing store. He had two teenage sons and a precious wife named Jeannette. She was in her early 40s and stricken with severe rheumatoid arthritis. Her fingers were bent and all the joints were swollen and enlarged. Her poor knees were enlarged and swollen because of the arthritis. She was seldom able to come to church she was in such constant pain. She usually went from her bed to a couch in their den. One afternoon I went by their home to visit. I was going to talk to Ray about some things. I went to their back door (I am kind of a back door preacher anyway) and was getting ready to knock on the sliding glass door, when I couldn't help but look in there and see to my surprise Jeannette Davis kneeling on those arthritic knees in personal prayer. She was not doing that because she knew I was there. I just happened to see her kneeling in prayer and I went ahead and knocked on the glass door. Ray came to the door and we had to literally help her up off of her knees. I said to her, "You don't have to get on your knees when you pray, Jeannette. God hears you." She chastised me for saying that. "Pastor, I want to get on my knees because I love Jesus so much. He has been so good to me." She was not a complainer. You always felt encouraged by her and I thought to myself, "Wow! What a woman who is in such pain willing to go to her knees when many of us are so slow to bow our knees." Bowing demonstrates adoration. When was the last time you literally got down on your knees before God and said, "God, I love you!"

## **2. Bowing demonstrates submission**

Not only does it demonstrate adoration, but number two, bowing demonstrates submission. I studied archeology in college. Some of the first drawings on obelisks and rocks we studied were drawings of a general who had just been conquered, on his knees, bowing down before the conquering general. He was saying, “You’re the boss. You’re in charge, and by kneeling before you, I am recognizing your authority over me.” Kneeling or bowing recognizes authority. By the way, all of you husbands here will be proud of me—I am really in charge at my house. The other night I had my wife on her knees in front of me. She said, “Come out from under that bed and fight like a man.” So, we understand kneeling down does recognize someone’s authority. In fact, the Roman Empire (in which Paul lived) annually required every person to go to their knees before the magistrates and say, “*Kaiser estan kurios.*” which is translated “Caesar is lord.” You say “Why did they throw those Christians to the lions? Why did they burn those Christians at the stake?” Because Christians refused to bow their knee to Caesar or to anyone or anything except the Lord, Jesus Christ. When you bow your knee, you are showing Jesus is in charge of your life.

When Joni Erickson Tada was 17, she was an active, beautiful teenager. But a diving accident broke her neck, leaving her paralyzed. She is a quadriplegic today. Many of you have seen the paintings of Joni where she puts a paintbrush in her mouth and paints beautiful scenes and calligraphy. Each one takes her many, many hours to do. She is a delightful Christian and speaks at many Christian conferences. Recently she was at a conference and the conclusion, the speaker asked everybody there to get on their knees before God, and everybody went to their knees except of course, Joni. In commenting on that night she said it broke her heart and she literally wept because she could not go to her knees. She prayed a prayer that night. “Lord Jesus. I can’t wait for the day when I will rise up on resurrected legs. The first thing I will do then is to drop on grateful, glorified knees and worship you.” Here is a woman who cannot kneel, but wishes she could. How many of us can kneel, but simply refuse to do so. The posture of Paul’s prayer ought to teach all of us something about bowing before the Lord.

## II. THE PETITION OF PRAYER

### 1. Pray for the strength of Christ

The second thing is the petition of the prayer, because that is what much of prayer is. It is going to God saying, “God, here is my list. Here is my petition of needs I have for others and for myself.” Paul prays for several things here. Let’s mention three things he prays for, because I think these are things God wants to answer in our lives today. Number one, he prays for the strength of Christ. Look at verse 16 again. “I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” When it says he wants God to strengthen us, does that mean he wants to give us more muscles? Does he want us to be stronger physically? No, that’s not what it is talking about. Although it is important for you to be strong and healthy physically, notice he says, “I want you to be strengthened in *your inner being.*” Did you know you have an outer being? Flesh and blood. But the Bible also says you have an inner person, an inner being. The invisible part of who you are, your soul and your spirit. It says in 2 Corinthians, 4:16, “Outwardly we are wasting away” It’s dying. It decays. It gets old. It hurts, but the Bible says, “The inner person is being renewed day by day.” Have you ever noticed people around us are spending more and more time taking care of the outer person? People are exercising more, that’s good. People are eating healthier, that’s good. People are making sure

they get regular health checkups, and that’s good. I wish we would spend at least as much time taking care of the “inner” man. So, Paul prays “I want you to be strengthened in your *inner* man, spiritually.” You say, “How can I strengthen the outer man?” Exercise, eat right. “How can I strengthen the “inner” man?” There are some exercises for you to do there too. That’s why it’s important for you to read your Bible every day. That’s why it’s important for you to pray every day. That’s why it’s very important for you to go to church regularly, because those are things that strengthen the “inner” man.

I heard about a guy who really went to church all he could. He gave a pretty good reason for it in a little poem. He said:

*Whenever I pass my church  
I stop by and pray for a visit  
So that on the day that they carry me in  
The Lord won’t say, “Who is it?”*

It’s very important for you to be strengthened in the “inner” man. How strong are you today spiritually? If some of us were as weak physically as we are spiritually, we wouldn’t have the strength to stand up and walk out of here. On the other hand, some of you dear saints may be weak physically, but you have great strength, spiritually.

## **2. Pray for the lordship of Jesus to be realized in your life**

The second thing he prays for is that the lordship of Jesus would be realized in their life. In verse 17 he prays, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” That word *dwell* literally means “that Christ may be the owner the master of the house.” You all have a dwelling in which you live. It may be a home, it may be an apartment, but it is one thing to simply *live* in a house and another thing to be a *guest* in a house and another thing to be the *master* of the house. This is talking about is being a Christian, not believing a big set of beliefs. Some of you really think to be a Christian you have to say, “All right I believe Jesus was born of a virgin. I believe he lived a sinless life. I believe he died on the cross. I believe he was buried and resurrected. I believe he is in heaven and he is coming back again...” Some people think if you just believe all those things, you will be a Christian. That is not necessarily so. It is not just simply believing—it is receiving Jesus Christ. That’s why that verse says Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Is Jesus living inside your life? That’s what it is to be a Christian. He may be living there as a guest, as Savior, but you have not let him be the Lord of your life. Have you ever noticed whenever you invite somebody into your home as a guest, you may say to them, “Make yourself at home. Just act like you do at home.” (but you really hope they don’t) When I go off and preach revivals, sometimes I don’t like to stay in hotels. I really like to stay in the homes of church members, just to get to know them. Always when I go into somebody’s home they’ll say, “Here’s your bedroom, you’ll share this bathroom down the hall with the kids. Just make yourself at home Brother David. Just act let you act at home.” Does that mean I throw my dirty clothes everywhere? Does that mean I act like I do at home? Absolutely not. I mean when I am in somebody’s house like I get up in the morning and get fully dressed to go to the bathroom. Do I do that at home? Sure I do...absolutely not! You know the difference between being a guest in somebody’s home and being the master of the home. Jesus wants to be the master of your life he doesn’t simply want to

be a guest there.

Let me illustrate this with a story from history. Years ago outside London, England, there was a very valuable piece of real estate called Potter's Field and John Ramsden, a real estate developer, wanted to buy it and develop it. So he began to buy up all the parcels of property. There was one man who owned a lot in Potter's Field who refused to sell. He held a grudge against Sir John Ramsden and his family and refused to sell at any price. Sir John Ramsden bought all the other parcels except that one lot. He even said to the owner "Name the price. I will pay any price." "It's not for sale." Sir John Ramsden said, "I will even cover every inch of the property with gold sovereigns." The man still refused to sell. So John Ramsden bought the rest of it and developed it. Whenever he went out to look at his property, that man was always there to antagonize him and he would say, "Remember, Sir Ramsden. Potter's Field is owned by thee and me! We are joint owners." That was a source of conflict his entire life. Well what do you think goes on in heaven when God and the devil discuss you. Do they do that? According to Job, chapter 1 they do. That's what God and the devil were doing when they were talking about Job. How good he was, or how weak he was. Could it be when God and the devil talk about me or they talk about you, the devil says something like this? "Remember, Father. David Dykes is owned by thee and me!" Is there some Hell's Half Acre in your life you have not surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ? Paul says, "I pray that Christ may dwell in you be the Lord the boss of your life." For many of you in this room you can say, "Jesus is my Savior I have my eternal fire insurance. I am not going to burn in hell." but is he your Lord? Anything he says, do you do it? That's what it means to make him Lord and that's what Paul prays for.

### 3. The love of Christ

The third thing he prays for is the love of Christ, that they may realize the love of Christ. That's where Paul talks about the height, and the breadth, and the width and the length of the love of Christ. Look at verse 18. "I want you to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." How wide is God's love? It's wide enough to embrace the whole world. How long is God's love? It's long enough to last for eternity. How high is God's love? It's high enough to take us to heaven. How deep is God's love? It's deep enough to reach down to the very worst sinner. When you start looking at all the superlatives of God's love, Paul almost goes crazy as he piles superlative upon superlative. I want you to realize today Jesus Christ loves YOU. Humans often say, "I will love you if you'll change if you'll do this if you love me I will love you." God doesn't say that. God loves you *unconditionally*. He loves you with a stubborn love. He'll never stop loving you. You may walk out of this church building today unsaved, but you won't walk out of here unloved. You could walk out to your automobile in the parking lot and shake your fist in the face of God and say, "God, I hate you I don't want your love!" But that won't change the fact one bit God loves YOU. How big is God's love?

Many of you have heard that old song: The love of God / How rich and pure / How measureless and strong. / It shall forevermore endure / The saints' and angels' song.

That song was sung for many years when they discovered written on the wall of an insane asylum another verse and that verse has since become the most famous: Could we with ink / The ocean spill / And were the skies / Of parchment made / Were every stalk on earth a quill / And

every man a scribe by trade / To write the love of God above / Would drain the oceans dry / Nor could the scroll contain the whole / Though stretched from sky to sky.

Paul says, “I want you to realize just how much God loves you.” Some of you can’t understand that kind of love. He says in verse 19 “and to know this love that surpasses knowledge” You will never understand God’s love so, don’t try to figure it out—just receive it. You don’t have to figure something out before you use it and enjoy it. I don’t understand electricity, but I’m not going to stumble around in the dark until I have it figured out! I’m just going to flip that switch and use it. And so it is with the love of God. This is what Paul prays for, that you will be strengthened, that Jesus will be your Lord, and you will understand how much Jesus loves you.

### III. THE PRAISE OF PRAYER

The final thing Paul talks about in this prayer is “the praise of the prayer.” Notice the praise, because in verse 20-21 he begins to praise the Lord. I memorized verse 20 and 21 in the King James Bible years ago and I like the way it says it. It says, “Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that you think or ask to him be glory.” Part of prayer is petition when you ask God for something but part of prayer is praise. I want you to see the difference between petition and praise. Petition enters heaven and it receives. A petition of prayer says, “Father, this is what I need. Give me this. Give this to those I love,” and it receives. But, praise enters heaven and it remains: It’s like taking a gift to heaven. Does the Bible teach that? Absolutely. Revelation, chapter 5 says, “When all the saints of all the ages are gathered around the throne of the Lamb of God, these four living creatures, [special duty angels] reach down and bring out bowls and in these bowls are the prayers of the saints,” and it is the word meaning *praise prayers*. When you pray a prayer of praise, it goes into heaven and it stays there forever. It is stored up in heaven and it will be a blessing to God for all eternity. The key to having your prayers answered is to learn how to praise God for your prayers when you pray it.

Some of you are so worried, eaten up with anxiety and fear and when you hear that passage from Philippians 4, “Be anxious for nothing.” Wonder how in the world can you live that way. He says next, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God.” Let me show you the wrong way to pray. “God, I need you to heal my son.” and when God heals your son, you say, “Thank you, God.” That’s the wrong way to pray. Here’s the right way to pray. “God, I pray you will heal my son and I thank you and I praise you that you are going to do it.” Do you see the difference? If you wait for God to do something before you thank him, there’s nothing miraculous about that. But when you thank him in advance that’s what it says, “Let your request be made known unto God prayer with thanksgiving,” you thank him in advance.

Look at that last section on your outline there. “God is able \_\_\_\_\_” I’m not going to fill that blank in for you. That’s for you to fill in. What is it you are struggling with right now? What is it that you lie awake at night thinking about? Is it a bad marriage? A bad job? Is it financial problems? Is it health problems? What is it right now that you really, really need God to do in your life? He’ll never do it until you can write down and affirm and believe God is able to save my marriage. God is able to heal my body. God is able to solve my problems. Until you write it down and believe it and praise God for it, it will never happen. Try praying that way for a

change. That’s the kind of prayer that gets heaven’s attention.

## CONCLUSION

Many of you have heard of George Mueller of Bristol—a man of faith. Years ago, George Mueller was on a steamship coming from England to America to preach in New York City, but the ship was immobilized for two or three days off the coast of Newfoundland, because the fog was so thick that they could not move. The days were passing and George Mueller realized he was in danger of missing his speaking engagement and he really felt like it was God’s will for him to be there. The captain of the ship was a Christian and he knew Mr. Mueller, so George Mueller went to the bridge of the ship one morning and said, “Captain, I must go to New York City. I can’t be late for this speaking engagement.” The captain said, “Mr. Mueller, I understand your desire to be there, but we can’t move. We can’t go forward in this fog or we might collide with another ship, or we could collide on rocks. We have to wait here until the fog is lifted.” They had been in this fog for two or three days. So, George Mueller said to the captain, “Captain, would you be willing to go below with me and pray God will remove the fog?” He could tell by the amused expression on the face of the captain that although the captain was a Christian, he wasn’t used to praying for things like that. The captain said, “Sure, Mr. Mueller. I’ll pray with you.” So, they went below deck. George Mueller got on his knees and prayed a prayer something like this. “God, I really think that you want me to speak in New York City and so I ask you to remove this fog so this ship can proceed. Thank you, God, that you have done this. In Jesus’ name. Then the captain begins to pray and George Mueller stops the captain. He says, “No, captain do not pray.” The captain said, “Why not?” George Mueller said, “For two reasons number one, you do not really believe God will remove the fog, but number two, I believe he has already removed the fog.” They went up on the bridge the sky was clear and the ship got underway—and George Mueller made his speaking engagement.

That’s the kind of prayer that touches heaven. Would you bow your head with me and let’s spend a few moments in prayer right now. What is it that you need right now in your life? Would you take just a moment and pray about that using the kind of prayer Paul used? Would you be willing to praise the Lord and thank him in advance when you pray for it? Whatever you have a need for, God is able. God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond what you ask him. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond all you could even think or imagine. Can you praise him for that?

There are some of you here today who are not Christians and I want to say to you the greatest need in your life whether or not you know it is forgiveness of your sins. This morning if you are willing to turn from your sins and put your faith in Jesus, Christ will come into your heart and save you. Maybe you would be willing to pray a prayer something like this. If I could just lead you in a brief sinner’s prayer. If you would pray these words after me silently but you mean it from your heart God will hear you. “Dear Jesus, I admit I am a sinner. I believe you died for me and I believe you love me. I believe God raised you from the dead and you are alive forevermore. Right now, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sins and make me a new person. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart. Now, become the Lord of my life. I ask this in Jesus name.



## OUTLINE

### I. THE POSTURE OF PRAYER

Bowing demonstrates

1. Adoration
2. Submission

### II. THE PETITION OF PRAYER

Pray for

1. The strength of Christ
2. The lordship of Jesus to be realized in your life
3. The love of Christ

### III. THE PRAISE OF PRAYER

1. Petition enters heaven and it receives
2. Praise enters heaven and it remains

God is able \_\_\_\_\_



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes