

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the precious gift of this day. Lead us, we pray, through its joys and its troubles, and may we continue to praise You throughout the whole day. May we grow stronger in faith as we learn more about how to deal in a loving and godly way with the many different things that happen to us. We praise You, Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN

### Other Prayer Suggestions

- Ask the Lord for His support and direction in your daily life
- Ask the Lord for His guidance in your personal relationships
- Ask the Lord for His help with all new ventures you start
- Ask the Lord for His assistance in the daily work you do
- Ask the Lord for His encouragement in the difficulties you face
- Ask the Lord for His blessing on all that lies ahead of you

## Meditation

We have been told that life will be tough, and will test us,  
Let us therefore be ready for all that's before us.

So that when the enemy finds our many weaknesses,  
We may reject his authority and uphold our faith:

So that when our dreams are shattered by daily life,  
We may stand firm in our belief that God cares:

So that when passing time yields no hope for our prayers,  
We may accept that Your will lies beyond us:

So that when the people we work with hurt us badly,  
We may be strong in love and not become bitter:

So that when the rest for which we long is too far away,  
We may refuse to panic and face life with peace:

In this way, God's Word is fulfilled throughout all our lives;  
And for us, everything 'works together for good'.

---

## Bible Study - Isaiah 56:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. <sup>2</sup> Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil.

<sup>3</sup> Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." <sup>4</sup> For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, <sup>5</sup> I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. <sup>6</sup> And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant - <sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

<sup>8</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

## Reflections

Prayer is a beautiful and remarkable privilege; it is the way that we communicate with the Lord our God, who has made us and redeemed us. Some of God's people find it relatively easy to pray, but there are many who find it hard, and do not know what to say even if they have many concerns to bring to the Lord. For such people, the Bible offers some helpful examples of prayer in the 'Lord's Prayer', or some of the Psalms. It is also possible to find assistance in books of prayers, and these can help people in both formal and informal acts of prayer.

A great deal has been written about prayer, and there are many books of prayers available today with many suggestions about how we might go about our prayers. They illustrate how to bring a wide variety of hopes, joys and desires to the Lord in prayer and appeal to a wide range of people in various personal and social circumstances throughout the world. These books can be very helpful, but if we want to understand best what it means to pray, then by far the best course of action is not to look into a book about prayer, but to turn to the Bible to understand more about the true nature of the God to whom we speak in our prayers.

The Bible tells us a true story that has taken place over thousands of years, in which God loves His world and His people so much that He guides them through their history to a place of safety and reconciliation with Him; this is our 'salvation'. Now, the same is true for you and me. The God we know through Jesus, and the God we know through the activity of the Holy Spirit within us, is constantly aware of our circumstances and is seeking to guide us through our history. If we tell Him about our concerns, then He has answers, and we need to listen to Him to hear what he has to say.

All this tells us that God is real and personal, and that in Jesus Christ, we have the evidence that He wants a meaningful relationship with each of us. However, this is not always reflected in our prayers. All too often, we pray rather vacantly, as if reciting a list of concerns into thin air and with no sense of the response of the One who listens. But God is listening when we pray, and we should at least have some picture in our hearts of His attentive listening to our prayers; perhaps He is sitting and listening, perhaps He is walking with us on the way, perhaps He is standing in front of us encouraging. Whatever picture we have, our God is listening to us, and He wants to speak to us, so we must give Him time to speak.

Being aware that God is listening will change the way that we pray. Now, in everyday life, when we speak at home to someone we love, then even as we speak, we know how the words we say will be received by the one we love. Indeed, we may even moderate what we say because we would not wish our words to be misinterpreted; our conversations are not just a matter of pouring out the thoughts in our heads, they are true sharing.

In the same way, what we say to God and how we say it is affected by what we know of Him, and the nature of our relationship. If we think Him distant and disinterested, then we will only bring our prayers out of a sense of religious duty, merely hoping that they will be of some good. If however, we have a lively relationship with our God and feel that we know Him well, then we will be confident that He will hear and respond to us with justice and love. We will also know that our God has our lives in His hands and He can make sense of all that happens to us, especially those things that seem incomprehensible to us.

Some will criticise such a simple way of understanding prayer, but we must surely start here. Whatever heights and depths of prayer we experience as time go by, if they do not start as a conversation between the Lord and ourselves then we have been deceived, and it will not be God who has deceived us. He wants to know our considered thoughts and feelings, and some of them are only fashioned as we begin to speak to Him in prayer.

Let us all continue in the quest to know the Lord better, through every means open to us, especially through knowing His Word, the Bible. He longs to know us better and to help us on our way through all the wonders and turbulence of our life's experience.

God bless you

Paul H Ashby