

Our prayers are according to God's heart desires or our own wills

Firstly we need to know who we are and what are our prayers (men's wills) toward God Who definitely has His heart desires revealed in the Bible.

“Who we are” means that do we have a pure heart toward God? Are we open to His speakings?

“What are our prayers” means that do we know God's heart desires which are certainly crucial and related to our daily living and living purposes.

Nehemiah

- Neh. 2:4** Then the king said to me, “**What are you requesting?**” So I prayed to the God of heaven.
- Neh. 2:5** And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that **you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.**” #1
- Neh. 2:6** And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), “**How long will you be gone, and when will you return?**” So it pleased the king to send me when **I had given him a time.** #2
- Neh. 2:7** And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, **let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah,** #3
- Neh. 2:8** and **a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy.**” And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me. #4
- Neh. 2:9a** **Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Proof of #3**

Neh. 2:5-8 tell that Nehemiah has had a long period of close fellowship with prayers to God. **His prayers were completely for God's testimony.** With God's leading, he had thoughtful planning. When the king asked him what he would like to request, his answers were immediate (such as #1-4 marked on the verses). **Neh. 2:9** proved that what he requested from the king in **Neh. 2:7** was a necessity. Therefore, our prayers in the Lord need to follow the revelation of God and have thoughtful plans for God's desires. Our prayers should not be vague, then the responses of our God would be clear. If we clearly know that our prayers are answered, our faith in the Lord will grow.

1st Samuel 1:

- 10** And she (Hannah) **was bitter in soul and prayed to Jehovah and wept much.**
- 11** And she made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, **then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head.**
- 12** And while **she continued praying a long time before Jehovah**, Eli watched her mouth.
- 13** And **Hannah was speaking in her heart**; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk.
- 15** And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord. I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been **pouring out my soul before Jehovah.**
- 17** Then Eli answered and said, **Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your request** that you have requested from Him.
- 18** And she said, Let your servant find favor in your sight. And the woman went her way; and **she ate, and her countenance was sad no more.**

Example of the prayers offered by Hannah

- What was her purpose of prayer?
- How did she pray?
- What was her reaction after she felt (had faith) that her prayers were answered by God.
- Do we know how to pray to God and have experiences that God had answered our prayers like He did to Hannah?

- God arranged a situation which caused Hannah to desperately pray. Many times we have a similar situation but refuse to pray to God rather try to find our own ways to improve the situation.
- Even we pray to God but not so desperate.
- Even we pray, we just desire to improve our situation but do not know or care about what God needs or desires.
- During our prayers do we consider or fellowship with God if God answers our prayers, what will be the next step which we will have toward Him? Hannah did.

1st Samuel 1:

19 And they rose up early in the morning and worshipped before Jehovah; and they returned and came to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and Jehovah remembered her.

20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah.

24 And as soon as she weaned him, she brought him up with her, along with three bulls and one ephah of flour and a skin of wine; and she brought him to the house of Jehovah in Shiloh, although the child was young.

25 And they slaughtered the bull and brought the child to Eli.

26 And she said, Oh, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here by you, praying to Jehovah.

27 **It was for this child that I prayed, and Jehovah has granted me my request that I requested from Him.**

28 **Therefore I, for my part, have lent him to Jehovah; all the days that he lives, he is lent to Jehovah.** And he worshipped Jehovah there.

- What did Hannah do when God answered her prayer?
- She offered Samuel back to God just like Abraham offered Isaac back to God.
- God knew that she had a pure and consecrating heart during her prayers toward God. That should be the reason why God answered her prayers because that was also God's need (Samuel).

Philippians 4:

- 6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
- 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses every *man's* understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13:

- 20 Now the **God of peace**, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- 21 **Perfect you in every good work for the doing of His will**, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The fellowship on these verses can be seen from those given in 1st **Samuel 1**. Hannah obtained peace eventually because God answered her prayers, and she offered Samuel Who God gave to her, back to God for God's need. How about us?

1st Corinthians 8:

- 39** A wife is bound for so long a time as her husband lives; but should the husband fall asleep, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only *to one* in the Lord.
- 40** But she is more blessed if she so remains, **according to my opinion**; but I think **that I also have the Spirit of God**.

Example of even the opinions offered by Paul

- Because Paul had so intimate relation with the Lord, even any opinion (thought) of him had the Spirit of God.
- This indicates that in our daily living we need to and must have a intimate relation with God like Paul did. However, many saints may not know how to come to God. Then it is not possible for them to surely know whether their prayers were from God or from their own wills.
- **The intimacy with God may be obtained by closely and constantly desiring to come to God and making many exercises such as calling on the name of the Lord, pray onto Him, read and enjoy His words, singing, offering thanksgiving and offering praises to the Lord with a pure heart. Close fellowship with other saints (spiritual companions, team members and relatively matured ones) is also a healthy exercise of the spirit.**

Luke 1:

- 5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zachariah, of the course of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.
- 6 **And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.**
- 7 And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in their days.
- 8 And while **he served as priest** in the order of his course before God,
- 9 According to the custom of the priestly service, the lot fell to him to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. (**Zachariah prayed but without faith v. 20**)
- 10 **And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the burning of incense.** (“**Church prayed for the need of the church that might meet the need of God. v. 16**”)
- 13 But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zachariah, because **your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son**, and you shall call his name John.
- 16 **And many of the sons of Israel he will turn to the Lord their God.**
- 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, **because you did not believe my words**, which will be fulfilled in their time.”

Church prayers often meet the need of the Lord (**Baptist John**) v. 16 that might in the mean time meet the need of the saint (**a son**) v. 13.

- Zachariah made prayers to God and he desired to have a son (**v. 13**).
- He even did not believe that God would answer (**v. 20**).
- However, multitude of the people also prayed to God. Some did know what was God's need such as **“Many of the sons of Israel need to turn to the Lord their God”**.
- Thus God answered the prayer of these people who knows the need of God. In the meantime, God uses Zachariah to answer such a prayer of these people, that by God's grace (that is the meaning of “John”) John is also Zachariah's son which was God's answer to the prayer of Zachariah.
- **Indeed church corporate prayers often meet the need of the Lord (Baptist John) v.16 that might in the mean time meet the need of the saint (a son) v.13.**

Matthew 18:

- 15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go, reprove him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (One saint: less Christ life for fellowships or prayers)
- 16 But if he does not hear *you*, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (Two or three saints: more Christ life for fellowships or prayers)
- 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church; (Church refers to many older saints who have relatively more Christ life) much more Christ life for fellowships or prayers)

The example of fellowships or prayers toward God or man:
It is purely a “Christ life” matter.

That is why we gain much more life in the church life in which we make prayers and petitions for one another according to our life level. However, due to some saints who have much more life we gain much blessings via their prayers for us. The testimonies of the church are increased by prayers which meet the need of God Whose heart is for His church.

Thus the church corporate prayer meeting is crucial for all the saints and the Lord.

Exodus 33:

- 1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, To your seed I will give it.
- 2 And **I will send an Angel before you; and I will drive out** the Canaanites, the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
- 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; **for I will not go up in your midst**, lest I consume you in the way, for you are a stiffnecked people.
Verses 2 and 3 mean that even God is angry with us, still He will do something which we like but eventually He will judge us.
- 13 Now therefore if I have found favor in Your sight, **please let me know now Your ways**, that I may know You, so that I may continue to find favor in Your sight. Consider also that this nation is Your people.
- 14 And He said, **My presence shall go with you**, and I will give you rest.
- 15 And he said to Him, **If Your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. (Moses knew God's way that Israelites must have the presence of God and not what God can do something for them)**
- 16 For how then shall it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, are distinct from all the other people who are on the face of the earth?
- 17 And Jehovah said to Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name. **(Moses made sure that God will go with the Israelites.)**

Our prayers should emphasize on the assurance of the presence of our Lord with us and not what God can do for us.

- Exodus 33: 2 &3 imply that God may provide us something (Entering into the land of milk and honey → a job, a house, a car, an A grade etc) but because our heart is like Israel desiring to have a golden calf, God will not be with us in this job, this house, this car and this A, etc.
- Moses knew God's ways (v.13) . Do we?
- Thus Moses insisted that God must be with Israel and enter into the land of milk and honey together (v. 14, 15).
- **Often we pay attention to only the result of our prayers and not God's need or presence. During praying we should be like Moses as our example to focus only onto the presence of the Lord Who will provide us definitely a result Which is good to Him and sometimes to us.**

Acts 16:

- 4 And as they (Paul and Timothy) went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- 5 And so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.
(Gospel preaching was prevailing via Paul , Silas and Timothy.)
- 6 And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. **(However, Holy Spirit [God] forbid them to preach gospel in Asia.)**
- 7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. **(Also, Spirit of Jesus [God] did not allow them to preach gospel in other places.)**
- 8 And bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas.
- 9 And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: A certain man, a Macedonian, was standing and entreating him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.
- 10 And when he had seen the vision, we immediately endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to announce the gospel to them. **(Bible tells us that Paul went to Philippi and was jailed. Why?)**

God's will is always broader, higher and deeper than even Paul's. Definitely Paul Who definitely had close intimacy with God prayed to God and tried to go to the region of Phrygia and Galatia, and then to Bithynia. But Spirit said No.

Then Paul was jailed after he went to Macedonia region. Why?

Acts 8:

- 25** They therefore, having solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem; and they announced the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. **(Gospel preaching was prevailing via Philip and some Apostles.)**
- 26** But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Rise up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is the desert *route*. **(However, an angel of the Lord [Lord] asked him to go to a desert route.) Asia.)**
- 27** And he rose up and went. And behold, an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, a man in power under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship. **(to preach gospel to a single person.)**

Again, God's will is always broader, higher and deeper than Paul's in Acts 16 and Philip's in Acts 8 even Paul and Philip had a living which was so intimate with God. Because of their living Paul and Philip knew the leading of the Lord and followed such leading. Even in the event of much spiritual blessings they still turned to what the Lord lead them to do. The lesson which we need to learn is to have a living filled with the rich experience of the leading of the Lord and follow such a leading. Do we?

Romans 9:

- 15** For to Moses He says, **"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.**
- 16** So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
- 17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very thing I have raised you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth."
- 18** **So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.**
- 19** You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- 20** But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
- 21** Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- 22** And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering **vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,**
- 23** In order that **He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,**

The fellowship on these verses can be seen from those given in Acts 16 and 8. God's wills are much broader, higher and deeper than what men can know. We are just vessels of wrath fitted just for destruction and need His mercy. Praise our Lord, God desires us to grow onto a vessel of honor.

Matthew 6:

- 31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, **‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’**
- 32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly **Father knows that you need them all.**
- 33** **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

Sometimes it seems that our prayers for our own needs are not answered by God, then we feel tired or frustrated, and do not have the will to pray more. **v. 33** grants us a very healthy heart turn, “but seek (**pray for**) first the kingdom of God (the needs of the church “the saints”) and (**praise and thank Him for**) His righteousness (Who God is and What He has accomplished and desired). Then God will answer our prayers.