Prayer in the Life of Jesus

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PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

by

HAROLD GLEN BROWN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
The College of Religion

Division of Graduate Instruction
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PREFACE

This paper has been prepared in the midst of a bloody conflict which has enveloped the entire globe. In a time when such gigantic forces of destruction are rampant in the world, it may seem to many that prayer is insufficient or utterly powerless to cope with this world-wide insanity. Yet it is in times of great crises that people become more conscious of their own inadequacies and instinctively direct their thoughts to that greater, mightier, higher power, God.

The present chaotic conditions intensified a long-felt need of the writer for a better understanding of prayer; as a result, this dissertation has been forthcoming.

We are greatly indebted to our major professor, Bruce L. Kershner, for his many helpful suggestions and comments.

Harold Glen Brown.

Indianapolis, Indiana.
April, 1942.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is intended as an exposition of the examples and precepts of prayer in the life of Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels.

The American Revised Standard Edition of the Bible (1901) is the text used. Nothing is attempted in the way of textual criticism, and conclusions that are hypothetical are avoided. Where the language itself admits of more than one interpretation, the more obvious is accepted, or the passage is interpreted in the light of other scripture and by means of the orientation of terms and incidents.

The main purpose of the dissertation is to effect a better understanding of prayer through a study of prayer in the life of the Master.
A study of prayer is a study of the very heart of religion.

Religious people, students of religion, theologians of all creeds and tendencies agree in thinking that prayer is the central phenomenon of religion, the very hearthstone of all piety. 1

The countless number of treatises that have been written on the subject of prayer is indicative of its significant position in religion.

Because prayer is a part of the mystical aspect of religion, it has given rise to even more theological speculation and conjecture than some of the other religious phenomena. Almost all the writers who have dealt with this very important subject have theorized and speculated so extensively that it is difficult to evaluate their various subjective conclusions.

There are almost as many definitions of prayer as there are men who define it. Hastings says that: "prayer may be understood widely, so as to include every form of address from man to God, whatever its character." 2 Montgomery also interprets


prayer broadly as expressed in his hymn:

   Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
       Uttered or unexpressed;
   The motion of a hidden fire,
       That trembles in the breast.  1

Inge defines prayer as: "the elevation of the mind to
God;" 2 Herman chooses to call it "Communion with God," 3 while
W. A. Brown terms it.... "the practice of the presence of God." 4

None of these definitions gives us a very clear and
cogent concept of prayer. If a definition of prayer is specific
and definite, it becomes limited and insufficient. If prayer is
defined broadly, the definition becomes vague or meaningless.
It is impossible to truly understand prayer through a study of
its etymology or by means of definitions. Prayer can best be
understood by studying a master of the art itself. "Who can
understand music but the musician, or prayer but the man who
long has prayed?" 5

1 James Montgomery.
2 W. R. Inge, Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion.
3 E. Herman, Creative Prayer. (New York: Richard R. Smith,
4 W. A. Brown, The Life of Prayer in the World of Science.
5 George Buttrick, Prayer. (New York - Nashville:
   Abingdon - Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 27.
And so to discover the true meaning of prayer we turn to Jesus, the master of the art. Prayer was an integral part of his life. This is not only evident from his frequent and effective use of prayer, but also from his many teachings regarding it. "Jesus had more to say about prayer than any whose words are recorded in our Bible."

If we remember that not more than one hundred of his days, and possibly as few as forty, receive any mention in the fragmentary record of the four Gospels, the oft-repeated reference to prayer is a portent.

Jesus' life of prayer and his teachings concerning prayer have had a profound influence upon the world. The model prayer which he gave to his disciples has been a precious treasure of the church up to the present time, and shall doubtless live as long as Christianity itself.

It is so beautiful, so comprehensive, and so satisfying that when the Parliaments of Religions was held in connection with the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893, the representatives of the leading religious faiths of the world adopted it to be

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used at the opening of each session. None would deny that Jesus was a master of prayer; yet strangely enough, few have turned to Him to learn his secret.

The disciples of Jesus were praying men. They had been brought up in an environment where prayer was a vital part of each day's activity. These men should certainly have had a good understanding of prayer; yet there was something about the way Jesus practiced prayer that was so different from anything they had experienced that they could not be satisfied until they learned His secret. It was while Jesus was praying in a certain place that the disciples sought Him out, and one of them said, "Lord, teach us to pray".  

So we, like those disciples, turn to Jesus -- confident that as we analyze prayer in His life we may come to a deeper appreciation of this profound spiritual practice, and that the true meaning of prayer will be disclosed.

Even though no definition of prayer is attempted, it is necessary to identify that spiritual practice in Jesus' life which we propose to analyze. As stated in our introduction, we are concerned only with those specific utterances of Jesus directed to the heavenly Father and His specific teaching regarding this spiritual practice.

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1Lk. 11: 1
CHAPTER II

FACTORS IN PRAYER

We shall approach our analysis of prayer in the life of Jesus by a consideration of these factors: (1) occasion, (2) purpose, (3) content, (4) effect, (5) discipline.

**Occasion.**

The occasion of prayer pertains to those conditions which make the emergence of prayer indispensable and inescapable. Even the man who prays slightly acknowledges that those occasions when prayer rises to the surface are fraught with great moment.

Prayer must arise in time, but the time selected is unimportant. Prayer must occur in some place, but the place itself has little to do with the stimulation of prayer. It is not one time rather than another, nor one place rather than another which will occupy our interest, but the critical issues concentrated into some situation in time which called for that prayer under those circumstances.

**Purpose**

The purpose of prayer pertains to the end which the person wants to see effected in that situation which demands prayer. Whether the person understands the tension of that situation with sufficient grasp to direct his prayer to the central difficulty will depend upon himself, but there can be
no doubt that effective prayer must discern the single purpose which can be accomplished in any situation through that means. By praying to that end all of the resources of man and God are engaged in the endeavor with no resources remaining unused and with none being dissipated. In considering, then, the purpose of prayer, we are searching for that single direction of events which will bring to bear all of the available powers upon the problem that has arisen. The prayers of Jesus illustrate such magnificent purpose that situations charged with disruption and confusion are united under the dominion of His will. With occasion we sought for those circumstances which were most decisive in demanding prayer; with purpose we are seeking for that reconstruction or anticipation of events which will satisfy the tension produced in a given situation.

Content

The content of prayer consists of what we learn from Jesus' prayer examples and precepts in regard to man's relation to God, God's expectation of man, and man's expectation of God. The unique relationship that existed between Jesus and the heavenly Father is asserted in Jesus' prayers and will be discussed under content.

Effect

The effect of prayer consists of that which occurred subsequent to Jesus' prayers and in direct relation to their contents, and what He taught could be accomplished through prayer.
Discipline

The discipline of prayer is the demand which prayer places upon the individual in order that the prayer may be acceptable unto God. The teaching in a prayer, or content, may give instruction as to how a life might be pleasing unto God, but discipline pertains only to that one activity of the Christian life, namely prayer, and discerns those attitudes on the part of the individual without which prayer for all the valuable content would not be acceptable unto God.

Not all these factors are evident in every instance of Jesus' prayers, nor is a separate discussion of each factor always attempted where they are easily discernable.
CHAPTER III
ANALYSIS OF JESUS' PRAYERS

The Model Prayer

The prayer that is commonly known as the "Lord's Prayer" was not, so far as we know, a prayer of Jesus to His heavenly Father, but rather a model which He gave to His disciples to follow. We have chosen to treat the prayer in this particular part of the analysis even though it is a part of Jesus' teaching on prayer rather than a direct utterance of Jesus to God. This has been done because there is available here an opportunity to analyze a specific form of prayer taught by Jesus which is both definite and comprehensive.

Occasion.-- The Gospel records disclose that Jesus taught the prayer on two different occasions. It is the first recorded in the Gospel of Matthew as a part of the Sermon on the mount. Again we find the prayer in a more abbreviated form in the eleventh chapter of Luke. In as much as the prayer in Matthew is more complete and contains all that is recorded in Luke, we shall use Matthew's account when dealing with the content.
The model prayer came as a response to a need of the followers of Jesus for a better understanding of prayer. Since Jesus embodied the model prayer in that great body of ethical teachings, the Sermon on the mount, He evidently recognized the fact that a knowledge of prayer was essential to an abundant life. In Luke's account it is the disciples who sense the need for a better understanding of prayer. Jesus had already talked to them a great deal about prayer.

But as they noticed how large a place prayer had in His life and some of the marvelous results, the fact came home to them with great force that there must be some fascination, some power, some secret in prayer, of which they were ignorant.1

It was this realization that prompted one of the disciples to say, "Lord teach us to pray."...

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Purpose. - Jesus gave this prayer to his followers because He wanted them to understand how to pray. The prayer was not given to serve as a magic formula

....to be repeated by rote, or said without number in normal ways, but rather in order to make luminously clear to us, by an example, the principles which underlie the true relationship between God and man that prayer implies.

It is...."a form of prayer that becomes the model and inspiration for all other prayer, and yet always draws us back to itself as the deepest utterance of our souls before our God."

Content. - Jesus takes us immediately into the presence of God and reveals His true nature to us with the words, "Our Father", recognizing that it is first necessary for us to have a knowledge of the character of the God addressed before one can properly pray. We must first know God to have intimate communion with Him. "Jesus bids us realize who it is to whom we pray and desire that this realization may be shared by all God's children everywhere."


"Our" recognizes the universality of God. It includes saint and sinner, white and black, intelligent and ignorant, rich and poor. Not only do all of us have the same God, but because God is our Father, we become brothers. "We are children of one home and cannot pray well until we try to trace the Father's likeness in every face."¹

Jesus reveals the character of God by using the term "Father", thereby proceeding from the known to the unknown.

There is austerity in God, because of His wise fatherhood; and there is mystery, for we are only children; but the salience of His nature is personal love of which the love of a wise and strong earthly father is but the broken shadow.²

"The knowledge of God's Father - love is the first and simplest, but also the last and highest lesson in the school of prayer."³

"Who art in heaven"⁴ calls our attention to the infinitely exalted character of God in order that we might more fully appreciate Him. The phrase does not restrict God from being immanent in the world.

¹Buttrick, op. cit., p 34.
²Ibid., p. 34.
³Murray, op. cit., p. 25.
⁴Matt. 6:9.
"Our Father is no distant God in a distant heaven who cannot be approached by His children. He is intimately near."\(^1\)

"As in heaven, so on earth"\(^2\) applies to the three petitions which precede it. It also establishes the reality of the actual and the ideal. Thus when Jesus tells us to pray, "Hallowed be thy name,"\(^3\) He is teaching us to pray that God's fatherly nature will be revered among men as it is in heaven.

"Thy kingdom come"\(^4\) has given rise to a great deal of controversy both as to the nature of the kingdom and as to the manner in which it shall be affected. The people among whom Jesus taught were looking for an earthly ruler who would free them from the Roman yoke, and so many of them placed a materialistic interpretation upon the kingdom. Some have thought that the kingdom referred to the church. Others have believed that it will come about in catastrophic fashion, that when the world is in its darkest hour, Jesus will return to establish his kingdom, and that since consummation can only be complete when Jesus Himself reigns as King, any attempt to change social conditions

\(^1\) Andrews, op cit., p. 47

\(^2\) Matt. 6: 10.

\(^3\) Matt. 6: 9

\(^4\) Matt. 6: 10
on a large scale is hopeless, and so our duty is solely to the individual. The social interpretation of the kingdom is expressed by W. A. Brown, who believes that when we pray for the kingdom, we pray for the time when God's will shall control all life, individual and social, when righteousness and peace and joy shall be the lot of all men everywhere and brotherhood shall be a fact and not simply a name.  

Robinson says:

Whether the reign of God be introduced by the rending of the heavens and the bursting of the earth, or whether it be slowly evolved by a process of moral and spiritual illumination in mankind, its nature is the same - the supreme dominance of the will of God.

This is certainly true, but it does not solve the problem as to why Jesus teaches us to pray for God's will to dominate.

Jesus certainly believed that the kingdom could be realized or He would not have asked us to pray for its coming. If the coming of the kingdom depended solely upon a whim of God, there would be no reason for men to pray. "Thy kingdom come. They will be done." Man must certainly have some part in bringing the kingdom about, and each individual is able to

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1W. A. Brown, Op Cit p. 62

retard or hasten its realization by his actions.

Therefore, we pray that the kingdom may come in its fulness that all may bring their wills into harmony with God’s will.

So far as the prayer comes from the heart and not from the lips only, it is in part self-fulfilling, in part it works according to the law by which God answers prayers that are in harmony with His own will; and in so far as the kingdom, though in one sense it has come, and is in the midst of us, and within us, is yet far from the goal toward which it moves, ever coming and yet to come, the prayer is one that never becomes obsolete, and may be the utterance of the saints in glory no less than of toilers and sufferers upon earth.\(^1\)

In heaven God’s will is done, and when the Master teaches us to pray, “Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth,” He is teaching us to ask that every act of every child may respond to the Father’s will. This prayer confronts us with a problem similar to the previous one. It assumes that God’s will is in part dependent on our wills, and that His will can not be done unless we pray.

In one sense the will of God, which is also the eternal law, must fulfill itself; but is one thing for that law to work in subduing all things to itself, another for it to bring all created wills into harmony with itself. And in really praying for this we, as before, in part fulfill the prayer.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 34,
Recognizing that there are certain material things of which we have need, Jesus encourages us to ask for sustenance in the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."\(^1\) Some have interpreted "bread" as being something over and above material substance but we feel that Jesus was using the term to apply to our material needs. Having previously expressed a desire that our wills conform to the Father's will, we ask for sustenance to fulfill our mission.

If we are asking God for those material things which are necessary to sustain life, why should "our" be used? Palmer answers the question in this manner:

The fact that the creator has created these bodies with such wants and has created food to supply the wants clearly indicates that the food was designed for us in the same way as sunshine belongs to a plant.\(^2\)

When Jesus tells us to pray to the Father that He "forgive us our debts",\(^3\) He teaches us to ask for the forgiveness of all our transgressions, indebtedness for acts committed against the will of God as well as acts of omission or inability to pay.

\(^1\)Matt. 6:11.  
\(^2\)Palmer, \textit{op cit.}, p. 60.  
\(^3\)Matt. 6:12
"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"\(^1\) has probably presented more difficulty than any other part of the prayer model. It does not mean at all that we are to plead with our Father not to lead us into temptation. The heavenly Father does not lead us into temptation. We are conscious of our human weakness and our proneness to give way in the hour of temptation to evil. We have just finished asking God to "Forgive us our trespasses", and we are fearful lest we fall into the same evils. And so we pray that the heavenly Father will so guide and direct us that we will not be led into temptation, but rather that we may be delivered from the threatening evil into which, or under the influence of which, our wayward inclinations are continually hurrying us.

**Discipline.** - And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors:"\(^2\) Jesus teaches us that when we ask God for forgiveness of our debts that we must possess a spirit of forgiveness toward all men.

\(^{1}\text{Matt. 6:13.}\)

\(^{2}\text{Matt. 6:12.}\)
W. A. Brown says that... "God cannot answer our prayers unless we comply with the conditions He has set."¹ Buttrick believes that...

The prayer for forgiveness does not point to a quid pro quo, as though God were the keeper of celestial ledgers carefully allowing just so much forgiveness to men as they are willing to grant to their enemies. It points rather to a living law whereby a cherished grudge in a man's heart perforce and of itself closes the door against an ever-pleading God, and whereby man's grant of pardon or itself opens the door to God who ever waits and loves.²

Even here in the region of the free grace of God, there is a law of retribution. The temper that does not forgive cannot be forgiven, because it is ipso facto a proof that we do not realize the amount of the debt we owe."³

In other words a loving and forgiving spirit toward one's fellow men is a sine qua non in effective prayer for forgiveness.

Intercessory Prayer

The intercessory, sacerdotal, or high-priestly prayer which is found in the seventeenth chapter of John is unique in that it gives the one supreme prayer and meditation of Jesus.

¹W. A. Brown, op. cit., p. 64.
²Buttrick, op. cit., p. 34
³Ellicott, op. cit., p. 34.
In the deepest sense of all it may be called the Lord's Prayer, because the pattern of prayer which is usually called by that name was intended for the disciples; but in this intercession Jesus Himself holds divine communion with His Father. 

In no other prayer is the passionate heart of Jesus so clearly revealed.

**Occasion.**—The prayer is uttered at the most crucial moment of Jesus' life. Jesus feels the strain of the approaching ordeal of the cross. Uppermost in His mind in His mission in the world. His earthly ministry is almost at an end. He is about to leave His disciples and to leave His work in their hands.

He has just finished a final comforting discourse with them and has closed His remarks with the victorious assurance, "I have overcome the world." Jesus is anxious about His disciples. He is thinking about the great responsibility He is placing in their hands as He prepares to make the great sacrifice. With these thoughts weighing heavily upon Him, He lifts His face to God in prayer.

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2. Jn. 16:33.
Purpose. — Jesus at this moment held in retrospection the past and surveyed the future. Conscious of the fact that He is about to leave His disciples, hopeful that His Father's kingdom might come throughout the world, Jesus prays to His Father for the triumph of His cause in order that His Father might be glorified.

Content. — It is clear that Jesus is thinking of Himself in the first five verses of the prayer:

"Father, the hour is come; glory thy Son, that the Son may glory thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."  

Jesus speaks as a son to his father as He opens His prayer, "Father, the hour is come." He realized that the climax and culmination of His life work is at hand. He is about to die upon the cross and so he prays for glorification in order that He might in turn glorify His Father. Jesus showed His willingness to complete His mission, to die for that which He believed in this first petition.

In the second petition for glorification the emphasis is changed. Jesus is looking back in retrospect at what He has already accomplished. The fact that Jesus

carried out the work entrusted to Him that He fulfilled the will of the Father in every detail will serve the glory and praise of the Father. All this being accomplished, the Father should now, in turn, receive the Son up into glory.

Jesus then prays for His disciples as such that have kept the word:

I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word, now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I come forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me.¹

Jesus' prayer now concerns His disciples, specifically His apostles. Jesus has proclaimed and taught the whole essence and glory to the Father to those men who the Father had given Him. He had sought to so imbue the apostles with His spirit that they in turn would promulgate His Gospel.

Jesus then makes a definite distinction between the disciples and the world: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me."² Alva Ross Brown says:

We are not warranted to conclude from this utterance that the Master never prayed for the world; that He did not desire His disciples to do so. Obviously this is a particular case; a time when His apostles were very much in His mind since He is about to leave His work in their hands."³

In the light of Jesus entire ministry no other interpretation is consistent. He who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" most certainly would include them in His prayers.

Jesus felt that the apostles were a sacred trust:
"...For they are thine: and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them." They could glorify Him because they recognized Him as the Son of God.

Jesus evidently was projecting His thoughts so intently into the future that the apostles faced that He already felt removed from them for he says, "I am no more in the world and these are in the world." He realizes that they face an evil world of intense opposition to Himself: "I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Knowing the terrific opposition that the apostles would face in the world, Jesus knew that if their efforts were going to be successful the same spirit must radiate from each one. The apostles were to be kept in the name of God.

1Lk. 19:10.
2Jn. 17:9, 10.
3Jn. 17:11.
4Jn. 17:14.
that unity might exist among them, unity such as exists between Jesus and the Father. Only by their constant awareness of God's presence and God's will could they hope to meet with success in the face of the prodigious obstacles that they were to encounter. Because He was soon to leave them and could no longer watch over them, He wanted them to experience a joyful intimacy with the Father such as He experienced so that they might properly carry on His great work and not succumb to worldly things. Jesus had a great task for them to perform. It was imperative that they remain in the world if they were to be successful; yet they must not yield to worldly things. Thus Jesus prayed, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one."\(^1\)

They were not to be segregated from the world. Rather they were to brush shoulders with all men. "they were to be in the world, but unlike the world. The difference is to be a spiritual matter, a difference of motive, of custom, of character, and not of external appearance.\(^2\) It is because Jesus knows how difficult it will be for them to maintain this difference that He is praying for them.

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\(^1\)Jn. 17: 15.

\(^2\)Alva Ross Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
Jesus closes this part of His prayer by praying for the consecration of the apostles to the work He had for them with the words:

Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, even so I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in the truth.  

Jesus consecrated His life that He might consecrate the lives of His apostles that God's will might "be done on earth as in heaven."

After praying for His apostles Jesus turns His thoughts to all those who were to believe in Him in all ages: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them, also that believe on me through their word". Jesus voices two prayers for all future believers, namely:

(1) "that they may be all one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may believe in us".  

(2) "that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

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1Jn. 17: 17 - 19.  
2Jn. 17: 20.  
3Jn. 17: 21.  
4Jn. 17: 24.
It is significant that Jesus asked but one thing for His disciples in this world, but that one thing is all inclusive. Complete unity would involve the loyal consecration of every professed follower of Jesus to His work. This would mean that the Christians of the world would present a united campaign to win the world for Jesus. Jesus wanted His followers to be one as He and the Father were one. Jesus was primarily concerned with the spiritual side of life, and so He was concerned with the spiritual unity of His followers. The exact nature of the outward manifestations of spiritual unity has been a moot question, but it is certain that Jesus prayed for spiritual unity.

Jesus' final yearning is that all of His disciples may also know eternal life. As He prays "... that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am"...,

The 1

1Jn. 17: 24.
petition for His own eternal life, and closes with a prayer that His disciples may share this eternal glory with Him.

**Effect.** - - What followed the greatest tragedy of the ages? What were the effects of the envious accusations of the priests and the cowardly decision of a time-serving judge? Standing in the shadow of His trial and death, Jesus prayed for Himself, His apostles, and His followers. He prayed that He might be glorified.

No other events in the world's history have been so carefully investigated from every angle and so thoroughly analyzed as the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. This minute study has been prosecuted as diligently by the enemies of Christianity as by its friends, and in all that ordeal through which Jesus passed from Gethsemane until His death on the cross, there was not one sign of weakness in his demeanor nor one word escaped His lips to give satisfaction to His enemies or bring shame to His followers.

He was glorified in His trials. At His hearings before both the sanhedrin and in the Praetorium His self control, spiritual poise, and frank statements attested convincingly to His innocence, and drew from Pilate the statement, "I find no crime in him."¹

¹Jn. 18:38.
The Christian religion is unique in that it puts

the consideration of others above the consideration of self.
The Master taught that he who renders the most service is
greatest in His kingdom. In the closing scenes of His earthly
life He was glorified by His strict adherence to that precept.
When the officers came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethse-
mane He healed the ear of the high priest's servant which
Peter had impetuously cut off, and stated the law of retribu-
tion as applied to physical violence, "For all they that take
the sword shall perish with the sword."¹

During His anguish on the cross Christ with solici-
tude entrusted His mother to the care of John. He also
spoke words of comfort and assurance to the imploring male-
factor nor did He fail to ask forgiveness for his enemies,
for those who crucified Him, and for everyone in that mob who
mocked and jeered Him.

Christ was glorified by His victory over death and
His ascension into heaven.

He has been glorified during the centuries since
Golgotha by everyone who has served humanity in His name.

¹Matt. 26 : 52.
The Apostles for whom Jesus prayed proved loyal to the cause for which He died. They preached the Gospel earnestly and courageously. He prayed for unity among them. While there were both spiritual and doctrinal differences among them, it is not likely that any other group of twelve or more men ever represented a cause with as great a unanimity of spirit and teaching.

Christ's prayer for the unity of His followers has not been fulfilled in any great measure. As previously stated in this analysis, the question of whether the unity prayed for was solely a unity of spirit or whether it also included a unity of minds agreeing on purposes and doctrines is debatable, but there is no denying the fact that there is a wide divergence in doctrines among Christian sects and but little unity in spirit and purpose.

Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

Occasion. -- Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was made under the most unusual conditions. When He drew apart from His disciples to pray, He knew that His betrayal and crucifixion were imminent. In fact, He had just instituted the Lord's Supper which would be meaningless without the shedding of His blood.
Purpose.-- "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt". There was not in the circumstances of this prayer, nor is there in the content the slightest indication that Jesus was tempted to recant or in any way abandon the cause for which He came into the world. Why then did He pray this prayer? "He was sorrowful even unto death." In great anguish Jesus threw Himself upon the ground and prayed with such earnestness and intensity that "His sweat became as if it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

Jesus statements, prostrate position, and unusual perspiration indicate that He had emotionally almost reached the breaking point. He was filled with sorrow and dread. Doubtless His emotional state and mental attitude were like that of the loyal soldier who is willing to die for his country but who dreads the ordeal of suffering and death and seeks to avoid them unless they are necessary to accomplish his purpose. Realizing His great need for strength and emotional control, Jesus sought the means by which He was accustomed to secure mental and emotional discipline.

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¹Matt. 26: 39.
²Matt. 26:38.
³Matt. 26:38.
Content.-- In this prayer Jesus addressed God as "My Father". This was the formula which He had given to His disciples when He taught them to pray. This salutation, used in this connection connotes that God is one who may be turned to in trouble as an earthly father is turned to by a distressed child.

It is not to be inferred that Jesus was doubting or questioning God's power to save Him from the cross. This is made clear by Mark's version which reads, "Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt."\(^1\)

Jesus asked for deliverance from the persecution of His enemies, only if that deliverance could be effected without interference, alteration, or frustration of God's will.

Effect.-- Jesus was spared neither the humiliation of the trial and jeers of the mob, nor the agony of the cross; yet He was strengthened to endure them. This effect was immediate. Luke records, "And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him."\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Mk. 14:36.
\(^2\)Lk. 22:43.
Prayers on the Cross

There are three recorded prayers uttered by Jesus on the cross. In the bitter throes of death He exemplified His teachings, "Pray for them that persecute you,"\(^1\) when He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."\(^2\) The effect of this magnanimity was an unyielding emphasis on His teachings on forgiveness.

The second prayer from the cross has given rise to much controversy. Skeptics have contended that Jesus expressed a shattered faith when He cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which is being interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"\(^3\) They have called it the cry of despair. This prayer is a direct quotation of the first verse of the twenty-second Psalm. Branscomb says that....

In Jewish interpretation these words of the psalm were not regarded as an expression of despair, but as a prayer of the righteous in the midst of adversity.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Matt. 5: 44 (Lk. 6:29)

\(^2\)Lk. 23:34.

\(^3\)Mk. 15:34 (Matt. 27:46)

Jesus might have quoted the psalm in this sense. Many scholars interpret the prayer as the last expression of Jesus' dying humanity.

Whatever Jesus' purpose in using the prayer, it is evident that He had not lost confidence in God as with His dying words He said, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit," 1

In this third prayer on the cross Jesus displays a profound faith in God and complete submission to His will.

Minor Prayers

**Jesus thanks Father that He hid things.**

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: Yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

The phrase, "in that same hour" indicates that the prayer is connected with the return of the disciples.

Jesus is moved to an extraordinary height of emotion. He is thrilled with joy in the Holy Spirit, and just as at His baptism the Spirit was associated with a personal conciousness or divine Sonship, so here the ecstasy of Jesus leads up to an expression of that Sonship which is unique in the Synoptic literature. 3

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1Lk. 23:46.

2Lk. 10:21-24 (Matt. 11:25-27)

Again, "The Fatherhood of God is the starting point of the consciousness of Jesus."¹ Not only is God, Father, but He is also "Lord of heaven and earth."

It is not stated what it is that is concealed from the wise and revealed to the simple, but it seems likely that Jesus is referring to Himself and His own revelation. Jesus has been distressed by the blindness of the theologians and scholars of the day, the scribes and Pharisees, but He is comforted in the thought that God has willed it for gracious ends, and that in as much as the revelation is given to the simple, there is hope that some day all will grasp it.

Prayer at raising of Lazarus. -- A large group of people is gathered outside the village of Bethany around a tomb in which four days before the body of a young man, Lazarus, had been laid away. Mary and Martha are deeply sorrowful over the death of their brother. Mary is still weeping while Martha is trying to be more composed. The rest of the group is probably made up of personal friends, acquaintances, villagers, and others from Jerusalem. Jesus is deeply touched and also mourns Lazarus' death. The stone at the mouth of the tomb is rolled aside.

¹Ibid., p. 27.
And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.¹

Jesus' attitude as well as His words, is meant to express that the work which He is about to do is one of the works of His Father. It is clearly evident that Jesus had been previously praying in secret. He expresses thanks to His Father, not because the Father had ever failed to hear Him, but because He wanted those hearing the prayer to realize His relation with the Father.

The effectiveness of Jesus' prayer is recorded by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, "He that was dead came forth....."²

Greek Visitors. -- Two or three days prior to the crucifixion some Greek visitors to the Jewish feast of the passover sought an interview with Jesus. The request seemed to bring to Jesus' mind a vision of the great outside world, after which His heart yearned, coming to Him so eager for what only He could give.

And instantly a thwarted vision like an ink black shadow came the other vision, never absent now from His waking thought, of the cross so awfully near. Shrinking in horror from the second vision, yet knowing that only through its realization could be realized the first - seemingly forgetful for the moment of the bystanders as

¹Jn. 11:41, 42.
²Jn. 11:44.
though soliloquizing, He speaks - "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

Jesus again prays that His Father might be glorified. Immediately His prayer is answered by a voice out of heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."²

Other Times When Jesus Prayed

Those passages of scripture which record Jesus' having prayed, but which do not reveal His exact words are invaluable in our analysis from the standpoint of occasion, purpose and effect.

Prayer at Jesus' baptism. - Jesus prayed at His baptism, in the great initial act of consecration to His mission:

Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.³

Thus the first moment of Jesus ministry is marked by prayer, and following the prayer God recognizes Jesus as His Son.

We cannot be certain of the purpose of the prayer,

¹Gordon, op. cit., p. 225.

²Lk. 3:21, 22.

³Mk. 1:35.
but if we assume that His prayer was the cause of the effect, then Jesus' prayer was for God's recognition.

Prayer in solitary place near Capernaum.—And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.

Jesus had spent the previous day, a sabbath day, in Capernaum. It had been a very busy day for Him, teaching in the synagogue service, the interruption by a demon-possessed man, and the casting out of the demon amid a painful scene: afterwards the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and then at sun-set time the great crowd of diseased and demonized thronging the narrow street until far in the night, while He went among them and healed them. Yet in spite of this strenuous and exhausting day, Jesus arises very early the next morning to pray to the Father. He evidently felt a need for a private devotional period after such a busy day.

Prayer in desert after healing of leper. — Not very long after the scene just described, Jesus had healed a leper who, disregarding His expressed command not to tell the news to anyone, published the fact widely so that great crowds followed Jesus to hear Him and to be healed by Him. After this incident Jesus again felt the need for private devotion and so "...he withdrew himself in the deserts and prayed."¹

¹Lk. 5:16.
Prayer on mountain near Capernaum. — And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God.  

Gordon states that "the time is probably about the second year of His public ministry." Jesus has been having very trying times with the national leaders from Judea who have followed Him, sowing doubt in the minds of the Galileans. It was also the day prior to His selection of the 12 men who were to be the leaders after His departure.

Wearied in spirit and faced with the task of selecting the 12 apostles, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer.

Prayers of thanksgiving. — We have record of Jesus' expressing thanks to His Father for food on at least two occasions, the feeding of the four thousand and the feeding of the five thousand. Thus Jesus recognizes by His example our indebtedness to the Father for our material gifts. Buttrick believes that there was something else that prompted Jesus to pray at the time: "He was on guard lest he abuse his power and try to reach heaven's ends by earthly means.  

1 Lk. 6:12.
3 Matt. 15:36 (Mk. 8:7)
4 Jn. 6:23.
5 Buttrick, op. cit., p. 36.
Prayer on mountain near sea of Galilee.-- And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone.\(^1\)

This incident occurred..."about the time of the third passover, the beginning of His last year of service."\(^2\) News had just reached Jesus of John the Baptist's death at a time when He and His disciples were very busy. There was a great need for rest and quiet to think over the rapidly culminating opposition. So Jesus and His disciples took a boat and headed towards the eastern shore of the lake. But the eager crowd noticed the direction taken and spreading the news, literally "ran" around the head of the lake and "out-went" them. So when Jesus stepped from the boat for rest, He was confronted by a large crowd. Wearied though He was, Jesus was so moved with compassion that He spent the day in teaching and healing. After feeding the five thousand Jesus sent them away and withdrew into the mountain to pray. Here again we find Jesus seeking private meditation after a hectic day of hard work and distraction.

\(^1\)Matt. 14: 23 (Mk. 6:46)

\(^2\)Gordon, _op. cit._, p. 217.
Prayer near Philippi. - And it came to pass, as he was praying apart, the disciples were with him.  

Jesus and His disciples are at this time up north near the Roman city of Caesarea Philippi. It is evident that Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds to pray, but He had taken His disciples with Him, perhaps to show them the frequent need for communion with God.  

Prayer at transfiguration. -

And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment became white and dazzling.  

The scene of the transfiguration is also recorded in Matthew and Mark, but it is Luke who explains that Jesus had gone up into the mountain to pray. Buttrick says that the prayer..."was a renewal of his initial consecration, an acceptance of the dark baptism of the cross."  

It is not necessary to consider here the nature of the transfiguration; it is sufficient to note the significant fact that it was while Jesus was praying that the change came over Him.  

1Lk. 9:18.  
2Lk. 9:28.  
3Buttrick, op cit., p. 36.
Prayer at Last Supper.--

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave to them, saying This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.  

Jesus expresses His appreciation to the heavenly Father for the Lord's Supper. He realizes the tremendous significance of this event and thanks God for all that it means.

Prayer for Peter.-- Shortly after the Last Supper and just prior to His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to Simon Peter:

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren.  

Jesus does not pray that Peter will not deny Him for he later predicts this denial explicitly, but Jesus prays that Peter will remain steadfast after he has repented of his denial.

The effect of the prayer is shown by Peter's great career as an evangelist. Of the original twelve disciples Peter stands foremost as a proponent of the Gospel.

1Lk. 22:19, 20. (Mk 14:22, 23; Matt. 26: 26, 27).

2Lk. 22:32.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF JESUS' TEACHINGS ON PRAYER

Occasion

Jesus does not particularize in His teachings; rather His precepts are so general in nature that they are applicable to human life regardless of time or environment. Because of this fact, we find that there are no precepts of Jesus regarding occasion. Instead of mentioning specific occasions when we should pray, Jesus admonished us to persevere in prayer -- to "watch and pray." Perseverance more logically falls under the factor of "discipline" and we shall discuss it under that heading.

Purpose

Pray for workers.-- Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for workers to spread His Gospel: "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest."

Jesus was at this time engaged on an evangelistic tour through all the villages and towns, and He saw that He could not meet all the needs of the people. He was deeply touched by their need for healing and for a message of peace and hope. The world was one wide harvest-field await-

1Matt. 9: 37, 38.
ing the reapers. Seeing that His disciples were the agents to meet this great need, Jesus tells them to pray for workers to reap the harvest.

"That they may stand before the Son of man." - Following Jesus discourse on things to come, He admonishes His disciples: "But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." In view of oncoming perils and woes, the followers of Jesus must constantly keep "watch", praying that they may stand before the Son of man.

Content

"Pray ye that it be not in winter." - In Jesus' discourse on things to come, He tells His disciples: "Pray ye that it be not in the winter," referring to the calamities that are to come. This statement is of little value in helping us to understand Jesus' attitude toward prayer, but it is a recorded incident of Jesus' teaching on content and so we include it.

1Lk. 21:20 - 35.
2Lk. 21:36.
3Mk. 13:18, 19 (Matt. 24:20-22)
Pray for persecutors. - "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." 1

The command to love our neighbors is extended to include even those whom natural impulse prompts us to hate, and the stress is....

laid on prayer as the highest utterance of that love. In such cases, circumstances may preclude acts which would be rejected; and words that would be met with scorn, but the prayer that they too may be delivered from the evil which has been their curse is always in our power, and is so praying we are drawing near to the mind of God, and asking that our wills may be as His. 2

Effect

Jesus teaches that prayer has an absolute and unqualified effect, but He clearly limits His teachings pertaining to effect by expressed or implied conditions. He always expresses or implied certain conditions that must exist before the effect of prayer can coincide with the prayer itself. We shall further discuss these prescribed conditions under "discipline"; we shall treat them here only in so far as they will help us to understand what can be accomplished through prayer.

1Matt. 5:43, 44 (Lk. 6:27, 28)
2Ellicott, op. cit., p. 30.
Ask, and it shall be given unto you.

"Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Here we have definite assurance that the heavenly Father will answer our prayers. This does not mean that God will always grant us exactly what we ask. Would an earthly father give his son a stone if his son asked for it, mistaking it for bread? Would he give his son a serpent if his son asked for it, mistaking it for a fish? An earthly father denies his children when they ignorantly ask what is not good. As an earthly father denies his children the harmful things for which they ignorantly ask, that they may learn what is truly good, so does the heavenly Father. God will answer our prayers in His own good way. At the moment it may seem as though our prayers are unanswered, but as time goes on we perceive, if we hold fast to our ideals, how God has all the while been bringing about a larger and nobler effect than even we imagine.

1Matt. 7: 7 - 11 (Lk. 11: 9 - 13)
"Believing, ye shall receive." — "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Here again there is the implied condition that what is asked is in harmony with God's will and laws. "If it were not so it would not be asked in faith and every true prayer involves the submission, or what it asks to the divine judgment."\(^1\)

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name" — "If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do;"\(^2\) if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you;\(^3\) ... That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you";\(^4\)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full:\(^5\)

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."\(^6\)

In all of these statements, Jesus is teaching that all things asked of the Father in the spirit of Jesus (or according to the will of the Father) will be granted. In other words,

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1 Ellicott, *op. cit.* p. 131
3 Jn. 15: 7.
4 Jn. 15:16.
5 Jn. 16: 23, 24.
6 Matt. 18: 19, 20.
Jesus again is saying that we must pray in harmony with God's will and laws if we expect the effect of the prayer to coincide with the prayer itself.

Curing of the epileptic boy through prayer. - After Jesus had driven out the "unclean spirit" that possessed the afflicted boy, His disciples asked Him, "How is that we could not cast it out? And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer." ¹

Discipline

Jesus in His precepts regarding prayer calls us to glad expectancy, but He reminds us that there are certain requisites for effective prayer.

Faith. -- Faith is one of the essentials for effective prayer: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." ²

"So the praying man must make his venture, scorning all insinuating doubts. He must believe that man is free, that God is near and good and mighty, and that the world will yield to their co-working. He must cleave to the faith that any good thing is too good to be untrue, and that God will bring it to pass. These were the assumptions Jesus made." ³

¹ Mk. 9:28, 29.
² Matt. 21:22 (Mk. 11:24).
³ Buttrick, op. cit., p. 32.
Humility.

'Always there is a demand for reality, lest faith should become a poor make-believe. Prayers that are ostentatious, like the blowing of trumpets on a street corner, are self-condemned.'

'And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.'

Jesus further taught the necessity for humility in prayer in the vivid parable of the Pharisee and the publican:

'Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

In this parable Jesus inculcates a lesson by contrasting two types of character, each appearing separately on the stage. The Pharisee typifies an extreme form of self-conscious virtue, claiming personal merit before God, and disdaining and condemning all who do not conform to its accepted standards and

1Ibid., p. 32
2Matt. 6:5.
3Lk. 18: 10 - 14.
religious practices.

In contrast Jesus portrays the humble and broken-hearted tax-gatherer who inconspicuously pleads with God to have mercy upon him, a wretched sinner.

The phrase, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself," indicates that the Pharisee was not praying to God at all; he was virtually praying to himself, half-consciously congratulating himself, that it was not necessary for him to pray to God for pardon, righteousness, or peace, though it was proper for him, by way of example, to express thanks to God for his blessings and to perform his acts of devotion.

He does not evaluate himself in terms of the infinite perfection of the God to whom he was praying, but in terms of the imagined greater imperfections of his fellow-men. He had no pity for the despised tax-gatherer, and his reference to him rings with scorn.

The publican was so filled with shame that he withdrew from the other worshippers. His downcast look is greatly in contrast to the supercilious expression of the Pharisee as he cries, "God be thou merciful to me a sinner."

"The self-righteous finds the gate of prayer forever closed; but the penitent, even though he has no prayer but to beat upon his breast and cry for mercy, returns to his
Because Jesus teaches that humility is necessary for effective prayer, there is a danger that the temper of the Pharisee may learn to veil itself in the language of the publican, men confessing that they are ‘miserable sinners’, and resting, with a secret self-satisfaction in the confession; or that, conversely, the publican — i.e., the openly non-religious man — may cease to smite upon his breast, and may come to give God thanks that he is not as the Pharisee."2

Sincerity. — One must be sincere in prayer:

"And in praying use not vain repetition, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." 4 Prayers that consist of "vain repetitions" or lengthy pretense are "... unanswered except in their own chas." 5

1Buttrick, op. cit., p. 33
2Ellicott, op. cit., pp. 333 f.
4Matt. 6:7.
5Buttrick, op. cit., p. 32.
The man who makes a public display of himself in order to impress upon others his piety cannot pray effectively. God is a God who does not reveal Himself to the carnal eye. Therefore, if we are chiefly occupied with our own thoughts and exercises, we cannot meet Him who is an unseen Spirit.

But to the man who withdraws himself from all that is of the world and men, and prepares to wait upon God alone, the Father will reveal Himself.¹

Jesus does not mean that we must always literally retire into a room and shut the door; it is the inward silence of the soul wherein we truly meet God.

**Perseverance.** -- The need for perseverance in prayer is forceably expressed in two parables: men should pray with the importunity of the widow who is harassed by an adversary and does not stop pleading with the unjust judge until he consents to help her;² we should persist in prayer as a man who knocks and knocks on his neighbor’s door at midnight asking for bread because he has received hungry company and there is nothing to eat in his house.³ These two parables of prayer that Jesus related are somewhat difficult to construe. Buttrick gives us such a splendid interpretation of them that I shall quote his entire discourse on them:

¹Murray, op. cit., p. 18.
²Lk. 18: 1–8.
³Lk. 11: 5–8.
We can be sure that Jesus does not mean us to regard God as either a callous judge or a grudging neighbor, for such a translation would flatly contradict all else taught by the Gospels. Some items in the story are only for verisimilitude. But the requirement of persistence in prayer is unmistakable. Why this demand? It is because we honor nothing cheap and easily gained? Gold is not often given in nugget, but in ore which must be mined, smelted, refined, and wrought into loveliness. Is it because prayer is a great art? Music is an arduous training, its gifts reserved only for disciplined seekers, and we may not hope to enter the treasures of prayer in the casual asking of a casual mind. Is it because by persistence our clamorings are purified? If desires are steadfastly refused, we may wisely question their worth. Is it because prayer is a friendship? We do not make friends by nodding our head to a man across the street once a month. A friend begins by appearing aloof. Then through speech and silence, through laughter shared and danger braved, through the give and take of unsuspected self-revealings, heart opens to heart and mutual loyalty is gladly pledged. So with friendship above time: it grows or oft-repeated meetings, contact, self-givings, and mutual trust. For whatsoever high reasons, men of prayer must knock and knock -- sometimes with bleeding knuckles in the dark. 1

Perseverance may seem to be at variance with what Jesus said concerning “vain repetitions.” The explanation is that the heathen believed in quantity in prayer and repeated their formulas, which often were meaningless, over and over again. Such a practice is abhorred by God. But Jesus teaches us if we approach God and pour out our hearts to Him and keep on doing this, we shall be looked upon with great favor.

1Buttrick, op. cit., pp. 33 f.
A forgiving spirit. -- Jesus taught very clearly the necessity for a forgiving spirit. At the conclusion of the model prayer, he said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Mark records a similar statement, "And whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have sinned against anyone; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." When Peter asked Jesus, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?", Jesus replied, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." Jesus used the expression, "seventy times seven", to mean that forgiveness must be granted ad infinitum.

Forgiveness is not so much an act as an attitude. If a man were to count up to 'seventy times seven' and at the four hundred and ninety-first offence say, 'Now I have fulfilled my duty; I need not forgive again, he would thereby prove that he had never really forgiven at all. It does not matter how often the forgiveness is needed; it must be granted every time."  

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1 Matt. 6: 14, 15.  
2 Mk. 11: 25.  
4 Matt 18:22.  
5 Robinson, op cit., p. 156.
This general lesson is reinforced by the parable of the unmerciful servant, who after being forgiven of his debt by his king, had no mercy on his fellow-servant and had him cast into prison because he could not pay his debt. When the king heard of the unmerciful action of the servant, he was "wroth" and handed him over to the torturers, until he should pay all that he owed. Jesus comments at the close of the parable: "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts."\(^1\)

The question as to whether God's forgiveness is directly proportionate to our forgiving spirit was dealt with earlier in this dissertation; therefore, we shall not discuss the problem here.

"In His Name".--

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full."\(^2\)

Jesus also said: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do."\(^3\) This does not mean that we can make

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\(^1\)Matt. 18:35.

\(^2\)Jno. 16: 23, 24.

\(^3\)Jn. 14: 14.
our prayers effective merely by closing them with the words, "In Jesus name." Praying in "Jesus name" is not a magic formula just as the model prayer also is not a magic formula. To pray "in the name of Jesus" means to pray as one whose mind is Jesus' mind; whose will is Jesus' will; whose attitude towards God and His Kingdom is Jesus' attitude. If we would ask anything in the name of Jesus, we must first be certain that we are ourselves in that name, our lives being hid in His life, our name in His name. We pray that just in so far as our prayer is in accordance with Jesus' mind it may be granted.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

We have sought to analyze the examples and precepts of prayer in the life of Jesus from the standpoint of the factors of occasion, purpose, content, effect, and discipline. In the concluding chapter we shall summarize and effect a synthesis of our findings pertaining to example and precept. It is our hope that this method will give us a better incite into prayer in the life of the Master of prayer, and, consequently, that a better understanding of prayer will result.

Occasion.

Jesus prayed at the momentous moments and great crises of His life. He prayed at the initial act of His consecration. He turned to God as He was confronted with the extremely important and difficult task of selecting His twelve disciples. He prayed before the raising of Lazarus, the healing of the epileptic boy, and the feeding of the multitude. He was transfigured as He was praying. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus gave thanks to God. Realizing the import of the step He was about to take, Jesus prayed as He prepared to leave His work in the hands of His disciples. He communed with His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane as He sensed His impending crucifixion. Of the few brief utterances during His agony
on the cross, three were prayers.

Jesus repeatedly felt the need to withdraw Himself from the busy life that He led in order to pray to God. After strenuous and exhausting days, when wearied in body and spirit from hard work, opposition, and distraction, Jesus prayed.

Purpose

Jesus taught that we should pray for the triumph of His cause which is the cause of our heavenly Father. This is really the final purpose of all prayer. There are various things that we have need of to help bring about the fulfillment of His cause, and we should pray also for these things. We should pray for power, for mental and emotional control. There are times when we should pray that others might hear and be effected by our prayers. We should pray for others that they may remain steadfast in the faith. We should pray for workers to enlist in His cause. Finally, we should pray that we may so act that we may ultimately stand before Him, the Son of man.

Content

The God to whom we pray is a loving Father. Consequently, all men are brothers. He is a universal God and yet He is intimately near to us. We must recognize the fatherhood
of God and the brotherhood of man in order to properly pray.

Because of the exalted character of God, we should pray that His name be revered among all men.

Our prayers should include a petition for the coming of God's kingdom, that all men may bring their wills into harmony with God's will in order that His will might be done.

We should ask our heavenly Father to forgive our transgressions, to guide us away from temptation, to deliver us from the threatening evil that is all about us, and to give us our material needs in order that we might do His will.

We should express thanks to God for our material and spiritual blessings. He specifically mentioned that we should thank God for food, for the Lord's Supper, for the power to accomplish, and for the fact that the Gospel can be understood by the simple as well as the wise.

We should intercede for individuals, our enemies as well as our friends. We should ask that spiritual unity might prevail among all of the followers of Jesus.

We may ask for deliverance from trials and hardships so long as the deliverance can be affected without interference, alteration or frustration of God's will.
Effect

The effect of prayer is strikingly revealed in Jesus' life. After praying to His heavenly Father, Jesus was able to raise Lazarus from the dead and to heal the epileptic boy. At the visit of the Greeks Jesus prayed that His Father might be glorified, and immediately a voice out of heaven cried, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." It was while Jesus was praying that He was transfigured. Jesus prayed that He might be glorified, and He was glorified in His actions during the trials, Gethsemane, and the cross. He was glorified in His victory over death and in His ascension into heaven. He has been further glorified by all those who have been devoted to Him. Peter, for whom Jesus prayed, remained steadfast after his denial and preached the Gospel with complete disregard for his own well-being, winning great victories. Jesus prayed for His apostles and they accomplished almost impossible things in His name. Jesus' prayer for the unity of His followers has not yet been realized.

Jesus explicitly taught that in so far as our prayers are in harmony with His will, which is the will of our Heavenly Father, we can expect them to be answered without qualification or exception. This does not mean that our prayers will always be answered as we might expect them to be. God knows what is best for His children and will answer our prayers as it is best that they should be answered.
Discipline

Certain demands are placed upon us in order that our prayers may be acceptable unto God.

We must have a spirit of forgiveness toward our fellow men. God is ever loving and merciful but we must have an attitude of forgiveness toward others lest we close our minds and hearts to Him. Because forgiveness is an attitude, it cannot be limited in any sense.

Faith is necessary for effective prayer. If we do not have faith in the God to whom we pray, then our prayers are empty and meaningless.

It is impossible for one to truly pray to the Father unless one is humble in spirit. How can one rightly come into His presence without a profound sense of imperfection and limitation?

Sincerity is also essential for effective prayer; otherwise prayer is a hollow mockery. Lengthy pretense and hypocrisy are antithetical to real prayer.

We must persevere in order that we may come to know God better. We must knock and knock at the door where God is ever listening.

And finally, we should pray in the name of Jesus; our minds should be His mind, our wills should be His will, our attitude toward God and His kingdom should be Jesus' attitude.
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Commentaries


**Articles**


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