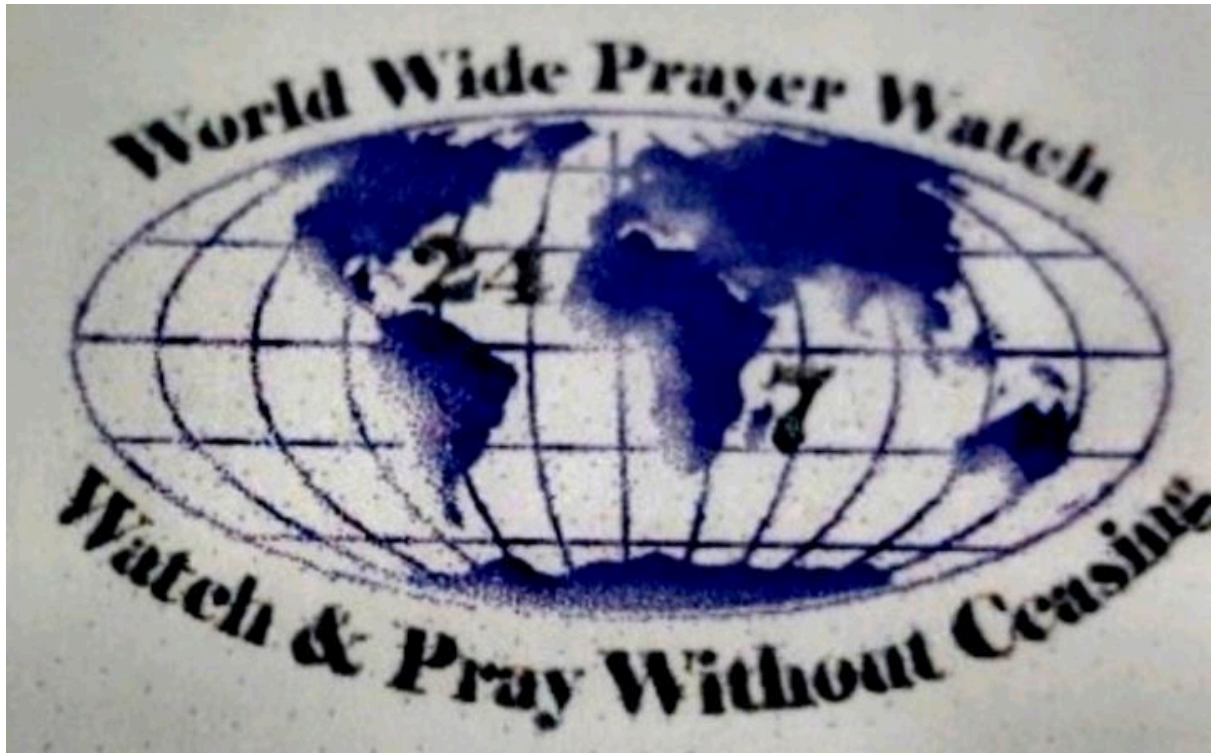


PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART
Worldwide Prayer Watch Ministries Series

PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART

Mervyn Naidoo

PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART



ALL SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS FROM NEW
INTERNATIONAL VERSION UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED
OR THE WRITER FOUND TO BE BEST UNDERSTOOD TO
THE BENEFIT OF READER.

PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART

MERVYN NAIDOO

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PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART

2 Timothy 1.9 ‘He saved us and called us to be His own people, not because of what we have done, but because of His own purpose and grace.’

PRAYER AND A CHANGED HEART

Prayer and change often walk together in God's plan for His people. Many may ask what has change to do with Prayer. Going to God has never been about the blessing of our own desires unless those desires have come from the Lord in the first place. The key is to receive from Him that which He so desires. Has this not so stalled the consistency of many a prayer lives? The desire to please God springs from the salvation of the spirit. Our souls are often in opposition to the work of the Holy Spirit. I am often asked 'why should we pray?' after all God knows all things! God is omniscient; He is all knowing and therefore knows all my needs. To speak thus reveals how little we know of Him our Creator and reveals our ignorance of the true nature and character of our Lord. He knows all things. He knows about all our needs. But do we know His hearts' desires?

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We ask and receive because it is in the will of God in the first place. God is never obligated to man's asking; if anything God is obligated to His perfect will taking place. His will is revealed to us by His Spirit in prayer.

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1. DRAWING NEARER TO GOD

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD

Prayer is Gods' design. Prayer is not a man-made invention or formula. It was designed by God for God. Prayer best understood is seeking God the Father through His Son Jesus through the help and leading of the Holy Spirit. God answers prayers. For years we have been taught that we may ask God for anything and He is just willing and waiting to give us whatever we ask. How untrue! If so, we would have already received what we have asked for and the balance if any is just a matter of time.

Prayer is asking for that which is already in the mind of God. In other words you ask for what is already in God's mind. But how do we know what is in the mind of Him who is our creator? To know what is in the heart and

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mind of God, we must first believe that God loves us. This is such an important aspect of the Christ walk. For we have not seen God but must use the measure of faith He has given us to believe that He truly loves us. Our natural self does not want to know what is in God's mind. Because the natural mind - the flesh is opposed to God. The natural mind does not believe that God has the best for us. If it was so that we believed then to God we would go all the time. The Bible tells us 'In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.' Psalm 10.4

The nearer to God we come, the more we know what is in His heart. When we draw near to Him the first and most important thing God does is change our hearts. We cannot change our hearts, only God can.

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The servant of the Lord understood this important aspect of prayer. In the 4th chapter of his letter to the people of God, the apostle James describes drawing nearer to God and the result. When we do, God also does so.

When we come near to Him, He comes near to us. ‘Come near to God and He will come near to you.....’ James 4.7

What we can do therefore, is to make that decision to have our hearts changed. A changed heart draws closer to God. Man must desire to draw closer to God. That decision is something we *can* make. God has given us that ability to do so. He has given us that ability to choose to do so. If our intimacy with God could be measured then it will be apt to say it is a measure of change in our hearts towards God that matters. Our willingness to change determines the change that God can make in our hearts. It would be

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well to also say, that the more we spend time with Him the more we are changed. The more time we spend with Him – the more time we are allowed for Him. God is the maker and giver of time. He gives it as He chooses.

Many years ago I felt emptiness within as a Christian. I just could not put my finger on it. I realize now what it was. My salvation experience came with a desire to draw closer to God. It came with a desire to be intimate with God and I was weak to resist it. My daily chores and lifestyle was however moving me in another direction. When I decided to respond to that inner voice, I found I was suddenly walking around with a changed heart. The reason is that God first works with the heart.

Jeremiah 29.12-13 ‘Then you will call upon me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek

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me with all your heart.’ The key here is for God to see that your heart truly desires to have what He has for you, or that you are at least willing for Him to change your heart - The willingness for God to give you a new heart. In our willingness to do it Gods’ way we will be drawn into a whole new life – a life hidden in prayer.

2. A NEW REQUEST

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When God works with the heart, which he does first, there comes many changes. One of them is our requests. When I began to pray many things I initially prayed for were no longer on my list of requests. My requests were different and many had to be abandoned and never included in my prayers again. Where they all requests that were ungodly? No! They were just not meant for me at the time. God gave me a changed heart which meant that the timing of my requests was also dealt with. The timing of my request was put in order. I also found myself praying for people, situations and things that mattered to God. Prior to this I personally would never have concerned

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myself about them. I was now praying for things that mattered to the Lord. I knew this to be true as there was a witness in my spirit as I prayed. I could sense they were a burden to the Lord. They now became my burden too that needed to be given back to Him. This I did through prayer. (Read: A Burden from the Lord.....Worldwide Prayer Network series)The burdens were new to me but always with Him. I found the way God saw a situation, a circumstance or a person, was different from how the world saw it or even how I once saw it. I had to get used to accepting God's way and not mine. For this I first needed a change of heart. The natural me saw things as the world did. God wanted me to see everything the way He does and that meant that the road ahead was going to be a lonely one. When the world was criticizing, God was telling me to pray for

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that person and do so with love. When the world would see no hope in a government leader, God was telling me..' though he is going nowhere, I placed him there for my purpose....now pray' And when I did, it made more sense than the reports I had grown so used too. I found, when I saw things the way God saw them, love was the main ingredient in it all. God's great love was in it. He wants to heal rather punish and this was totally contrary to the world and some of the churches views on the matter. God wanted to see repentance rather than death. God wanted to see healing rather than leaving. And so God's desire was that I have a change of heart so that I may be able to see as He sees it. And when I did, He was using me to bring about change. You see when I saw things the way God did; I was able to pray what was in His

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heart about such matter. This is the new request!

The problem we have today is that we are not willing to see a thing the way God wants us too. Many times we are afraid to see it the way God sees it. We know that there may have to be a change in our thinking....a thinking we have grown to love and is very close to our hearts and therefore the fear.

When I prayed for a particular person, it was already in the mind of God for that person to be given another opportunity to repent and have a change of heart. God waits for us.

As I write I am reminded of the story of Jonah the Prophet. Jonah prayed to God. He saw the wickedness of the land and reminded God of the sins of the people. The interesting thing about this is that the pain and anguish that Jonah felt was something

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placed in him by God. Something Jonah never saw was that his cry to God about the sin of the land would involve him in bringing about a change of heart in the people. But along the way, the self of Jonah came forth. He passed judgment on the people of the land of Nineveh. Therefore when God came to him and asked him to have the people repent, he refused. ‘The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish.....”’ Jonah 1.1-3

Jonah prayed for this city and knew well how God would respond to these people. He never liked the way God deals with a nation or a people. For Jonah that is being too lenient and undeserving. Is that not the heart of natural man guided by his own instincts?

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‘But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? I know that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”’ Jonah 4.1-2

As He began to change my heart, I began to see things differently. I came to understand how patient God is even with the sinner. And this is because of His Son Jesus. I enjoyed praying and talking with Him. You see God began changing my heart. My spiritual eyes were being opened. I now had a heart that God wanted me to have. It was a heart given by Him and therefore had all to do with Him. My flesh fought back and still does but my heart no longer belonged to me – it was His.

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If my heart was new then God would be able to speak to me. If my heart was new then I would be able to hear what He was saying. God changes our hearts, making it new as we pray. Prayer is God's design in that through engagement – He uses it to change our hearts.

A changed heart helps us see Heaven. Knowing God's heart means we know Heaven. In his letter to the Church in Ephesus the writer wrote the following '.....and I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.' Ephesians 3.17-19. The writer here

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knew that the key to this understanding was in prayer.

The prayer that the Lord taught His disciples had much to do with Heaven. 'May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Matthew 6.10

Our willingness to be sincere will make us more sincere towards Him. This He does through the work of His Holy Spirit.

Sincerity towards God has a lot to do with change. The heart of each man must first be willing to change. The heart above all things is devious and bound to stray. But with God we are swayed back into His presence.

Many times we assume that as followers of Christ, we automatically have our minds and hearts changed in an instant. Yet only our salvation is instant because of the finished work on Calvary. But our hearts

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and minds – we must work out (our salvation) with trembling and fear.

A change of heart opens our spiritual eyes. When God changes our hearts He helps us see. Our eyes are closed and only God can open them. The Lord had to change the heart of a powerful man who had his heart set on destroying the Church. So determined was he that the very first time we are introduced to him, is whilst he is busy supervising the death of one of God's own. 'They dragged him (Stephen) out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.' Acts 7.58

And just two verses later in chapter 8 vs. 1, we read the following 'And Saul was there, giving approval to his death'

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Do you know who this young man was? Well we meet him again in Chapter 9, and he is still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

‘Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Lord (The way), whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.’ Acts 9.1-2

This very man was to become the one whom God would reveal the secret of salvation for the Gentiles. He became one of the most powerful of the disciples and one to walk the face of this earth after Christ came. He was first to have a change of heart and never again walk this earth by compromise.

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‘As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from Heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him,” Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he trembling and astonished, said “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”” Acts 9.3-6

Saul later to be called Paul was to be used mightily by God. Though Paul was on a mission to destroy the people of God, there must have been something within him that questioned all his work. There must have been a pricking of his conscious. I have always found it interesting how a man of

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Paul's caliber had his heart changed. Is it not interesting how immediately in his blindness he addresses the voice as – 'Lord'? Paul had a change, a transformation right there. Years and years of persecuting the Church had come to an end in an instant for Paul. Every thought he had about Jesus prior had changed. This Jesus whom he was persecuting, calling a liar and denouncing whatever was said by Him is suddenly revealed to him as the Lord he is persecuting. He knew immediately that He who appeared before him was higher. His heart had such a transformation that all Jesus had to say to him was 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting' in response to 'who are you Lord?'

When the heart of each man is transformed, he is able to discern the heart of a Holy God. This change must first be initiated by man

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for God to work. In other words it must be first the decision by us to want God. Change begins when man goes to God. Man must show that he wants this change. Deep within us all, we can never be satisfied less God. The earthly man, full of himself is just that – full of himself. He can go no further than himself. He may push and shove his way through life, only for the comfort within this earthly dimension which eventually perishes. Anything outside the dimension of time and he seems lost. And so when he's time here on earth shall come to an end, he returns to the dust from whence he came.

3. DESIRING WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE

DESIRING WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE

God loves us. The Bible teaches us that God knew that we would all perish. But His love for us changed that. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3.16

Good things are meant for good people. All good people are meant for good things. The problem is that we are not purposed for good but to be Godly. We are little gods. Therefore good is not the best for us. That which is good can never come close to what God already has for us.

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The Bible teaches us that God desires for that which is in Heaven to be on earth. He deliberately calls us to pray *this* to Him. In the book of Matthew, Jesus warned His disciples to pray what the Father wants them to pray. ‘Do not be like them (hypocrites), for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.’ Matthew 6.8.

The disciples came to Jesus asking Him to teach them to pray. ‘He said to them, “When you pray”, say: “Father, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. May your Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”’

In the Greek the word ‘will’ has two meanings: The first is Boulema: Boulema is the eternal will of God. In other word’s it will be done on earth whether we like it or not. For example God sending His only begotten Son to die for the world was bound to happen.

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Christ's return to earth is one day is not dependent on us. It is bound to happen and is not dependent whether we feel for it or not. The sinner coming to Christ and being accepted by Him as a His Saviour is bound to happen when he repents because of the promise of the Lord and His grace and mercy towards us when we repent.

The other is Thelema: This means that God's desire most often depends upon the response of the individual. Many things have piled up heaven because of Thelema. Thelema depends on our asking, our doing and eventually results in our reward one day before God. Thelema is a desire for what God has prepared for us here on earth. It is a desire to walk with God, to be used of him whilst on earth, to be healed when sick, to walk in in the Spirit and be delivered from the flesh.

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Through prayer God is able to change the heart to desire what He has already planned. If the heart of man is not changed, then very little if any can be done for God. Very little of Heaven can be established through man on earth if he is not praying. God through prayer reveals to man his desires for earth.

4. DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD

Psalm 37:4-5 'Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.' The original Hebrew meaning of the word delight is to be 'soft and pliable 'in the hands of God.' We become workable in His hands. Prayer is responsible for causing this softness. Prayer is responsible for the creation of this pliability in Gods' hands. It is the removing of what we want and replacing it with what He desires. The word heart here has to do with our inner person. That is our inner thoughts and deepest

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feelings. It is also about our inner yearnings. When we go to God in prayer, we allow for Him to change our hearts to from hard and rigid to being soft and pliable.

Going to Him allows for that which is ours to be taken away and replaced by that which is of Him. We must allow the Lord to reveal it to us as believers that our hearts can be changed.

Vs. 5 says ‘Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.’

That word it here is the desires that He has now placed in our hearts that we then give back to Him prayer. To ‘Commit’ according to this scripture is to surrender or to roll over the responsibility of deciding on to Him. It is then that God brings to pass those new God given desires that we allowed Him to place in

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our hearts. I hope that you will understand this for it is an important principle of Prayer.

In us allowing God to make us soft we become flexible for God to work with us. We become soft for God to work through us. It is here that God is able to take away the desires that are for our own selfish reason and replace them with His. When He removes and replaces the old selfish desires in us, we become more loving and open. We are no longer restricting God to do what He really wants to do through us. God wants to do things through prayer. He is now able to place in you His desires for you and in you His desires for others. This means that you and the Lord desire for the same thing.

In delighting in Him I have now come to love what He loves and hate what He hates. Any

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wonder why we are never the same after going to God. Intimacy with God changes things. These scriptures explain clearly how after Him placing His desires in us, He then brings those very desires all to pass. As we become “soft and pliable” in His hands, the things He desires will become the things we desire.

‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’
Isaiah 55.8-9.

It is a wonderful thing to know the thoughts of God, more so when I come to know about His wonderful thoughts regarding me. I am are unique in the eyes of the Lord and prayer reveals the purpose and plans that God has

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for me. His word tells me that He loves me and I belong to Him. Prayer gets us to know the mind of God about us. It is a unique characteristic about prayer. This is something designed into prayer by God. For heaven to release, the heart of man must first desire what He desires. This desire is the work of the Lord and is placed there by Him. When this yearning has been placed there by God it is then the duty of man to bring it back to Him. It is still the duty of the believer to show that he is in agreement with God. This is Prayer. This then my friend is a Life Hidden in Prayer. Welcome it, embrace it and be a part of what God is doing.

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Father God we ask you this day that we will desire the things that you have for us. For this to happen we understand that our hearts must first be changed. This we cannot do on our own. Give us a new heart that moves by the leading of your Holy Spirit and is surrendered to you at all times. We thank you Dear Lord that this is your heart's desire for us and it is so! Amen

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Worldwide Prayer Watch Ministries

Teaching and Encouraging
The Church to Pray

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