

"THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER"

Hebrews 4:14-16

When you face a tough challenge, do you pray as a first response or as a last resort after you've tried everything else? James had this to say about this matter of prayer . . .

James 4:2... You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Could it be that you are missing out on a blessing, a provision, or a victory that God has made available to you because you have not prayed for it? Unfortunately, for many Christians prayer has become a dull, lifeless routine. You know, go to church, read the Bible, give an offering, and pray.

Dr. Jerry Vines shared the gospel with a young lady from Rhode Island. She received Jesus as her Savior and Lord. In a follow up conversation, He explained that God's children have the privilege to come to

Him in prayer and talk to Him just as a child might talk to her father. She had been taught that she had to go to a priest and get him to make intercession for her. The young lady responded to this new truth with wide-eyed amazement. She said, *"You mean when I want to talk to God, I don't have to go to a man to get him to talk to God for me?"*

Prayer is a vital part of the believer's life . . .

- **It's the key to abiding in Christ.**
- **It's the key to spiritual blessedness.**
- **It's the key to conquering sin.**
- **It's the key to spiritual confidence.**
- **It's the key to overcoming anxiety.**
- **It's the key to living in victory.**

As a born-again believer, you can pray anytime and anywhere and about anything. As a Christian you have 24/7 access to the presence of God!

JESUS INVIGORATES OUR PRAYER LIFE.

Open your Bible to Hebrews 4. Let me read verses 14-16. In these verses, I want to point out to you three powerful ways that Jesus adds purpose and meaning to the prayer life of a believer. First, I want you to see the impact of . . .

1. THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS

Hebrews 4:14...Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

You may be wondering what makes Jesus superior to human priests. In this verse, **He is called our great high priest because of His ministry.**

- **He never committed a sin, not even one.**
- **He serves in heaven (Heb. 8:1-2)**
- **He is our high priest forever (Heb. 7:23-25)**
- **He identifies with us (Heb. 2:10-13)**
- **He is merciful and faithful (Heb. 2:17; 3:1-2)**
- **He sacrificed Himself to save us (Heb. 10:10-14)**

Jesus is called our great high priest because of His identity.

The Bible says that *"He has passed through the heavens."* The verb *"passed"* is in the perfect tense which means that this is something that happened in the past but it still retains present implications.

Jesus died on the cross and offered Himself as the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins. He was raised from the dead. He ascended back to heaven where He presented His atoning blood. The Father accepted Him and His sacrifice and seated Him at His right hand.

Hebrews 1:3... And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Furthermore, I want you to notice, our great High Priest is *"Jesus, the Son of God."* This combination pictures the perfect blend of our Lord's humanity (Jesus) and His divinity (Son of God). Aaron couldn't

make this claim. The Pope can't make this claim. No other priest in all history could claim to be fully God and fully human and no priest in the future will be able to either.

Jesus, our great high priest, is seated in heaven at this very moment. Get this now. **He is interceding for you.** He never takes a day off. He never gets tired. Nothing ever catches Him by surprise. He draws upon the vast resources of heaven to meet your deepest needs. Glory to God!

Considering the ministry and the identity of Jesus, our great High Priest, we can certainly embrace the challenge to ***"hold fast our confession."*** This refers to our confession of Jesus.

Romans 10:9–10... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **10** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

No matter what pressure or persecution you may face, never compromise what the Bible teaches about Jesus, our great High Priest!

JESUS INVIGORATES OUR PRAYER LIFE.

We're looking at three ways Jesus adds purpose and meaning and zest to the prayer life of a believer. First, we've delved into *the supremacy of Jesus*. Second, I want you to see . . .

2. THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS

Hebrews 4:15...For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

I'm so glad that Jesus, the Son of God, is our High Priest! "***Sympathize***" is a compound word which means "*to suffer with*." The use of the word here points to an intimate knowledge that is packed with feeling and concern for the other person. Our great

High Priest understands us perfectly and He loves us permanently.

Think about Jesus' ability to sympathize with Mary and Martha when Lazarus had died. He was moved to the core of His being. In fact, the Bible says that when He arrived at the tomb of their brother He wept with them. Your great high priest is continually responsive to your flaws and your feelings.

Look at verse 15 again. The Bible says that Jesus, our great High Priest, is **"One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."** Get this now. Jesus faced every type of temptation—*retaliation, hunger, pride, unforgiveness, disappointment, frustration, anger, bitterness, etc.* He did so without giving in to sin even once. C.S. Lewis wrote...

Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is...Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means.

Think about it. Who really knows what it's like to fight the heavy weight champion of the world—a

guy who gets knocked out in the first round or a guy who goes 15 rounds? I think you can see my point.

Hebrews 2:18... For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

The Lord Jesus Christ understands you perfectly and He comes to your aid when you are tempted (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

I think you will agree with me. Prayer is an amazing privilege that is offered to every believer. Here's a fact you've got to get settled in your mind and heart.

JESUS INVIGORATES OUR PRAYER LIFE.

We're looking at three ways Jesus adds purpose and meaning and zest to the prayer life of a believer. First, we've delved into *the supremacy of Jesus*. Second, we've explored *the sympathy of Jesus*. Finally, let's examine . . .

3. THE SINCERITY OF JESUS

Hebrews 4:16...Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus, our great high priest, has genuinely given you permission to approach the throne of God in heaven's *Holy of Holies*. It is there that we can offer our prayer to the Lord our God. This privilege of prayer is not based on *our feelings*. It is based on *our faith*. You have the right to pray on your best day and on your worst day. You might wonder how this is possible.

John 14:6... Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Ephesians 2:13, 18... But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **18** for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

As a believer, Jesus has paved the way for you to have access to the throne of God at any time, as often as you wish, and whenever you have a need. That's what I call invigorating our prayer lives. Praise the Lord!

Lock in on the promise Jesus gave to us. When we come to the throne of grace, we will receive mercy for our failures and grace to help in time of need.

Mercy—God does not give us what we deserve.

Grace—God gives us what we don't deserve.

J. Sidlow Baxter commented, **"By His finished work on the cross we have a full, free, final, and forever forgiveness from God; by His intercessory priesthood we are kept in continuous fellowship with God."**

Luke 22:31–32..."Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; **32** but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Our prayers need some serious help from time to time. Sometimes they are blurred with improper motives. At other times they do not line up with the will of God. However, before they arrive at the throne of God, Jesus reformats them.

CONCLUSION

Prayer has been crafted by the Lord to be an integral part of every believer's life. God forbid that we take this amazing privilege and reduce it to a monotonous routine. I want you to know . . .

JESUS INVIGORATES OUR PRAYER LIFE.

We're looking at three ways Jesus adds purpose and meaning and zest to the prayer life of a believer. **First, we've examined the supremacy of Jesus.** **Second, we've explored the sympathy of Jesus.** **Third, we've explained the sincerity of Jesus.**

Do you see why He is the only one who could ever carry this exclusive title (Great High Priest) and this kind of responsibility? J. Sidlow Baxter said, "We

couldn't stand for a moment down here, if He were not living for us up there."

Have you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If you haven't, I want to invite you to do so this morning.

If you are a believer, I want you to rejoice in the privilege of prayer. Jesus loves you and He has your best interests at heart. Whatever you do, make sure that you hold fast your confession and make sure that you draw near with confidence to heaven's throne of grace.

Is there a failure that you need to confess to the Lord? He promises that you will receive mercy.

Is there a need in your life that you need to bring to God's throne today? Come to the altar and present your request.

Is there a temptation that is hounding you this morning? Come to the altar and ask for the Lord's help

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CFBC... "Prayer"