

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Lord's Prayer

by Rev. Gerald Procee

Lecture #14

Blessings of Prayer



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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The Lord's Prayer

14 Lectures

by Rev. Gerald Procee

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Lecture #14

Blessings of Prayer

Welcome to lecture number 14, which is the last lecture in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. In this last lecture, we wish to consider the blessings of prayer because there are rich, wonderful blessings attached to prayer. It is thrilling. It is wonderful and exciting. In Scripture, who were the ones who were blessed? They were men of prayer. We see how they prayed and that they were blessed in their daily life, and they were truly kept by God, and they prospered. Think of Abraham, but also think of Abimelech. Abimelech was also rich. Abraham was rich. But who was blessed? It was Abraham. Laban had many possessions just like Jacob, but Jacob was blessed. Saul was king just like David, but David was blessed.

Those who are blessed were men of prayer: Abraham, Jacob, David. We think of Daniel, Hezekiah, Cornelius, and Paul. They were all richly blessed because they were men acquainted with personal prayer. So, there are rich promises connected to prayer. The Lord hears the needy when they cry to Him. How many times did David not cry out of great need; and [how many times was] Moses standing repeatedly for impossibilities—standing before the Red Sea, standing before murmuring people, being in situations where there was no food, no water, standing against enemies who were attacking the people—and the Lord repeatedly delivered him?

The Apostle Paul, with all his daily cares for the congregations, being continually in danger, having suffered robberies, shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, thirst, imprisonments, and yet, every time the Lord delivered him and led him through the hardships. Paul did not complain about the hardships because he had trust that God would lead him through, that God would bless him, because God hears prayer. Scripture is full of that. Think of Psalm 34 verse 6: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” Is this not what can be written under the lives of every child of God? That’s why the Lord can deliberately at times lead them into certain struggles and difficulties so that they despair of their own strength, and they flee to God, and the Lord delivers them.

So, the Lord also encourages them in advance. John 15:7, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” God hears prayer, for He says to the Prophet Isaiah 65:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” You may be convinced that in the way of personal, upright prayer the Lord will hear you. In prayer you may say, “Surely, Lord Jesus, because of Thy meekness we will follow Thee, hearing that Thou dost not despise the poor sinner, that Thou hast not despised the penitent thief on the cross, and neither hast Thou rejected the weeping woman who was a sinner, or the beseeching Canaanite woman, or the woman caught in adultery, and

neither hast Thou rejected the praying publican, or the denying disciple, nor the persecutor of the disciples. And in the scent of this sweet-smelling ointment, we will follow Thee and trust that Thou shalt not despise us as we come before Thee begging for Thy grace.”

God hears prayer, but it's through prayer that God draws you close to Himself. The apostle says somewhere to Timothy, “Exercise thyself to godliness.” How could Timothy do that? By means of prayer. Through continual prayer, you are drawn close to God. There, in prayer, you will experience the goodness, the grace and the mercy of the Lord. It is the best thing on earth to live close to the Lord. Then, you stand in His strength. In this way of living close to the Lord, ministerial work will be invigorated. Your personal life will be richly blessed. People notice when you have been in the presence of God. That will radiate in your life, in your actions, in your demeanor. It's in this way that you receive spiritual strength and stamina to fulfill the task God has laid upon your shoulders.

By prayer, you taste God's goodness. It's even at times a foretaste of heaven, the sweetness connected to personal prayer, a sweetness you can taste nowhere else. Heaven can be so close to you during prayer that one experiences a true inner peace with the Lord, that the Lord would enlarge love to Himself in your heart. There will be an unction upon your spiritual life. The Lord will enable you to carry on, providing you with grace and courage. Also, in difficult days, you will find out that as your day, so shall your strength be (Deuteronomy 33:25). In prayer you taste God's goodness.

Prayer also uncovers your shortcomings. It's through prayer that you become aware of your deficiencies. We mentioned that earlier already in a previous lecture, but now we must highlight this. Because if sins continue in your life unchecked, they will damage your work. So-called small sins can be highly detrimental to your work. You can be cold, indifferent to needs of people. You can deal harshly with people, even while you don't even want to be like that, but you're still doing it. These little foxes, they spoil the vineyard. They will prove to be highly detrimental to your work.

It's very good to become aware of your personal weaknesses and besetting sins, and the Lord shows you this in the way of prayer because through prayer God's Spirit leads you and points out to you your shortcomings. Then, in prayer there is the opportunity then to confess these sins and to ask for grace to combat these sins. Now the blessing of prayer is that prayer gives security to God's children. It provides safety to them because you call upon the Almighty God Who hears the cries of His people, and their cries are engaging His power and goodness for their wellbeing and safety. You need God to carry on. You need the Lord to show Himself strong in your life. You flee to His name as a tower of defense, and you rely upon His everlasting arms. You need His strength, His security, His protection. If God be for you, who can be against you (Romans 8:31)?

Then He will give you strength to even do things you never expected yourself to be able to do, but you were not able to do them, but God does it through you. He gives you words. He gives you stamina. He gives you safety. Then, the world becomes weak in comparison to the strength and the grace of Almighty God. The world can boast about many pleasures and allurements, but a Christian receives strength to resist them all. God gives the privilege of being adopted as a child of God, that you're being filled already now with a foretaste of eternal weight of glory, fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore. How can a world with all its allurements compare to the pleasures of God's right hand? When the Lord is close to you, you will not desire the world. You will look with disdain upon the world, feeling sorry for those people because you have found the Pearl of great price. You are kept safe from the temptations and the allurements of the world because prayer gives you safety.

Prayer also undermines the work of Satan. The devil is a great adversary. An ardent prayer

will spoil the work of Satan. The powers of Hell have felt the force of prayer. That's why Christ commanded His disciples to pray that they would not enter into temptation. Under assaults of the devil, we should look unto Christ. By prayer, we should confess our sins. By prayer, we may receive grace of God to resist the devil. If we have fallen into sin, confess this as soon as possible, for then Satan's accusing mouth is stopped, and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness, and peace with God is restored. Through prayer, the Lord renews grace and strength to resist the temptations of the devil. The Lord assures us that His grace is sufficient and that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (II Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer leads us to the God of peace Who has promised to trample Satan under our feet shortly (Romans 16:20). In prayer, we receive wisdom to understand the deceit of the devil. Through prayer, wisdom will be increased. Love to the Lord will be nurtured, and our hearts will be closely knit to the Lord, and so we will be kept from temptation, and the alluring strength of Satan will be undermined.

Prayer also weakens the flesh because we have still our flesh and the sinful desires and lust of the flesh. These lusts, they wage war against our souls. What does David do to obtain the victory over his lusts? He prays against them. Cleanse me from secret faults, and keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Prayer will kill corruption. Through prayer, sanctification, holiness, [and] dedication to God will take place. Grace is received, and mortification of the flesh is accomplished in the way of secret prayer.

Let us also consider various admonitions to persevere in prayer so as to receive the blessings of prayer. Certain admonitions, certain guidelines on how to pray. Pray with boldness. To gain blessing upon our prayers, be bold in your prayer, because God is more than able and willing to grant you your requests. They add to His honor. Pray therefore with boldness. Be aware that you are calling upon the greatest Power in existence, and He has promised through His Son to be a most gracious God and Father to you.

We read in Scripture so many examples of people praying. Think of Samson praying while he's standing there between the two pillars. He begged God, "Grant me one more time, and strengthen me, oh, Lord" (Judges 16:28), that he would fulfill his calling as being a judge upon Israel. Think of so many other examples in Scripture of people praying. Nehemiah praying that God would enable him to shield Jerusalem and its people from the attacks of Sanballat and Tobias, and that he himself would be faithful in leading the people. Think of prayer, even of the servant of Abraham going on this strange errand to find a wife in Padanaram for Isaac. How could he do it? He prayed, and he prayed with boldness. Pray with boldness. Daniel, Jacob, we saw those examples already and how Moses, in humility, he pleaded for God's nearness.

Also, pray in faith. Believe that your prayers make a difference. "Ask, and it shall be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). He is willing to grant you your request to His honor. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 9:29, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Praying without faith is like cutting with a blunt knife. It doesn't work. And therefore, Mark 11:24, "I say unto you what thing soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." Pray in faith.

Also, pray always. Again, we should emphasize the need not to neglect prayer, but to be always engaged in prayer. There are various reasons for this, why we should always praying. God is always ready to hear. He looks down upon this earth. He is listening to those who seek him diligently. He can give far above what we imagine or hope. John 4:23, "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Isaiah 59:1, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." We

should be always praying because Christ is always interceding. He helps the believers by lifting up their prayers to God in Heaven. Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

We should also be praying because the Holy Spirit is ready to help us in our weakness. He gives grace and ability to pray. Therefore, be always in prayer because the Spirit is always ready to instruct us, to enliven us. He is willing to relieve us from our deadness. He enlarges our hearts in laying our desires before the God of all grace. He strengthens us to wrestle for a blessing. He pleads along with us with groanings that cannot be uttered, Romans 8.

We should be praying always because the devil is always ready to attack us. He's compared to a lion. And when a lion retreats, he always retreats going backwards. He keeps his eye focused upon you. That's how he retreats. He's always ready to make another attack. You know, that's how the devil is always at work. Be alert for the attacks of the devil, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). By all these designations, the apostle Paul is referring to Satanic powers, the devil and his demons always ready to attack, and therefore be always in prayer. We should always be in prayer because our natural inclinations to sin easily rise up, and they are against us. When we neglect prayer, the ugly head of inner corruption rises up. It regains strength. David should have been praying instead of walking on the roof of his house and looking at that woman. If he would have been praying always, he and his family would have been spared from much misery, but he did not pray. He looked.

While Israel was fighting against Amalek, as long as Moses had his hands lifted up to Heaven, Israel gained the victory. But when Moses' hands fell down, Amalek gained the victory. This is an illustration of the necessity of continual prayer and why prayer is indispensable. We cannot really fully put into words, but let's recognize the fact, even when we find it difficult to explain it fully. Do we really think the church would exist as it does now without the High Priestly prayer of Christ? He continually prays. Let Him be our example.

Also, combine your prayer with meditation. Train yourself in your prayer to reflect upon the miracles of God's salvation. Meditate upon the curse that rests upon us because of our sin, that we are polluted, that our souls are affected by sin, our wills are ruined by sin; and consider the love of God against our corruption, the love of the Father, that the Father has loved you from all eternity, that He has set His eye upon all of His children, and that God loves also His righteousness, and that He desires that His righteousness would be fulfilled, that He cannot have dealings with you unless a payment is given for your wickedness. So, God was willing to give His Son to die in your place.

What a great love of God the Father, and what a love of God the Son that He was willing to come. He was the rich God. Yet, He humbled Himself so deeply, so far. He was entitled to everything, and yet He chose such great humiliation. During His life on earth, He had nothing that He could call His own, no cradle, no place to lay His head. He didn't even have His own grave. The last thing He had, His clothes, were even taken from Him. Such love in order that you would be saved, reconciled to God. Think of the love of God, the Holy Spirit, that He formed the body of Christ in the womb of Mary, that He anointed the Lord Jesus and equipped Him to perform His work, and that He applies the work of Christ to the heart of a sinner, and that He draws this sinner to Christ, and He continually leads that sinner. Oh, meditate on that great love of the Triune God! Don't dwell quickly upon Them with hasty thoughts, but dwell deeply upon Them. Meditate on Them. Then you will experience how the love of God starts to burn in your heart. Because instead of the earth opening its mouth to devour us, as happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram, that's what

we also deserve; instead, heaven opens itself by this great love of God. He gives life instead of Hell. He gives love and Heaven. He gives grace for grace.

The Son has become your Brother. The Holy Spirit has become your Comforter. God has become your Father. Oh, be overshadowed by the love of the Sacred Trinity. This is the peace of faith. This formed the strength of the martyrs. This was the joy of old Simeon. This is the honor of God. It's so good to meditate in your prayers upon Who God is.

Through prayer, we also receive God's grace because, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23). God is pleased to answer prayers. Again, we highlight this. Elijah, he prayed that the rain would stop, and it stopped for three and a half years. Then, he prayed again, and it started to rain. Through prayer, the sun stood still in the days of Joshua. In the days of Hezekiah, the shadow of the sundial went back 10 degrees because the Almighty power of God did it all. Through prayer, thunder and lightning descended from heaven to confuse the enemies. Through prayer, God gave rain when it was needed. Through their prayers, the Red Sea was divided. Through prayers, the Lord gave fruitfulness and blessing to the earth.

Some say if Steven had not prayed that God would forgive them their sin, Saul of Tarsus would never have been converted. Through prayer, prison doors have been opened. In the days of King Asa, 1 million soldiers were vanquished by prayer. Think of the privilege that Queen Esther had to come into the presence of the king. But, we have a far richer privilege, to come before the King of kings, Who has all might and power upon earth. Therefore, God's children may go forth from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7).

One of the English godly ministers once wrote, "The true Christian is effectually marching on in pursuit of his victory. He keeps his enemy in his eye. He is cautious. He is watchful. He dispatches messengers, his prayers, his sighs, his tears, to bring down fresh supplies from above. His prayers speak. His sighs cry. His tears have a tongue, and they all go up with the same message." This is a quote from the English Puritan, Richard Alleine, from the 17th century.

You see, it's an inestimable miracle that God has given this opportunity for us to pray, and that He has given us His Word. Be dependent upon His Word. Study His Word. Combine that with prayer, for how we need God's Spirit to breathe through us, the entirety of our lives, especially pastors. Then you will be faithful. Then you will be equipped.

Think of the example of a harp. The person who plays the harp comes and sits beside a harp. He or she starts to play, to pluck the strings, and the whole instrument becomes alive. Now, you are the harp. God's Spirit comes alongside, and He fires your soul. He touches the emotions. He brings the melody of the heart out, and the music begins to ascend. It's the music of the soul and the love of the soul for God. So, let us pray that "the spirit of grace and supplication be poured out upon us and among our people" (Zechariah 12:10).

When we pray, be not content with some outward forms or simple words, but strive, and wrestle, and pray for the grace of God and for the help of the Holy Spirit. He will teach you. He will lead you through your lives as pastors, as Christians, and He will bring you to that place where one day there will be no more prayers, but there it will only be adoration. Then, God will receive all glory, praise, thanksgiving, honor, and adoration till all eternity. There we will receive the fullest awareness of the beauty of prayer. The Lord bless you all and make you to be fruitful in His service. Thank you for watching and listening to these simple lectures on the Beauty of Prayer.