

Praying Scripture: The Cry of the Longing Heart

Joe Novenson

Intro:

A. “Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach, only how to pray. He did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of praying well. To know how to speak to God is more than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but power with God is the first thing.”

Andrew Murray (1828-1917. Pastor for 60 years in the Dutch Reformed Church, South Africa)

B. The means of grace are: the Word of God, prayer, church, and the sacraments. The two we are offered by our Lord to embrace for everyday use are the Word of God and prayer. Of the two, only prayer has an entire book of modeling its practice. Prayer is embodied and expressed in 150 different ways.

In the Psalms, the Word of God and the prayers of God’s people are fused in a glistening array of glory.

Theme: Clearly the living God sees there is eternal profit in praying the Word of God. To have dedicated 150 prayers to the inspired Word of God is to have modeled what we must need.

I. The Lord Jesus taught prayer by putting phrases in our mouths.

A. Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”

B. Luke 11:2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Our Father, hallowed be your name’...”.

C. He gave them words to say. Take my words and make them your words.

D. Matthew 6:9 Jesus said, “This is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name’...”.

E. He put his words in their mouths.

F. J.I. Packer in Growing in Christ “This prayer is a pattern for all Christians praying ... that is to say, every prayer of ours should be a praying of the Lord’s Prayer in some shape or form.”

G. Putting words in our mouths seems so very rote, ritualistic, routine, insincere, intellectual, and not heart-deep.

H. Not necessarily— watch a mother with her child: say “thank you;” say “please;” say “I’m sorry;” say “I love you.”

- I. It is simply how the least mature are taught to speak to anyone. We put words in the mouths of the infant until they make them their own.
- J. You see people throughout Scripture prayerfully employing Scripture.

Example 1

Acts 4:23-33 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

Example 2

Revelation 15:1-4 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Example 3

Matthew 27:45-46 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Psalms 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

These are prayed by Christ.

Taken from Joel Beeke, pastor of Heritage Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, "The agony of the unbearable stress. The cry uttered when the undiluted wrath of God overwhelms the soul. It's heart-piercing, heaven-piercing, and hell-piercing. The agony of unmitigated sin, all the sins of the elect, and the hell they deserve for eternity..." and Christ prayed scriptures!

II. Praying Scriptures takes to the heart a living reality that reshapes us.

- A. Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum
- B. Presumed dead? Or very much alive?
- C. I Peter 1:22-25 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.
- D. How does Peter view the Word?
- E. What is it about the Word that makes Peter respond this way?
 1. The Word of God and God's very essence and nature are closely identified.

John 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Galatians 3:8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."
 2. The Word of God and his judging precision are closely identified.
 3. The Word of God and his creative power are closely identified.
 4. The Word of God and his sustaining power are closely identified.
 5. The Word of God and his directive guidance are closely identified.
 6. The first human act recorded is speech.

When God spoke to humanity he was not condescending and assuming a social construct we humans invented, called speech...he had already lifted us, dignified us, and privileged us with the honor of reflecting and imaging him with speech.

7. Satan's chosen tool to destroy the universe was to distort God's Word.

8. Jesus' use of God's Word:

1,800 verses of the Word of God are quotes of Jesus.

180 of those verses are Jesus quoting Scripture (that is conservative).

10% of every word Jesus said as recorded was the Word of God.

One out of every ten words.

Luke 19-31