

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of January 2018

The Nature of Prayer

(Matthew 9:37-38)

Sunday, January 7, 2018

This invitation contained in this passage of scripture fell from the lips of Jesus himself. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

So many of us have lived with only a partial understanding of what our Lord was seeking to communicate in these words. Consequently, our response to His command, His gracious invitation, has been only partial. Many have seen in this verse an encouragement to pray for Christian workers when there are vacancies within the church. Congregations have lifted their hearts to God when they were without a shepherd. Pastors have used this verse as a basis for praying that God would send workers to sing, to teach, or to work with children and youth. Certainly this type of a petition is encouraged by the text, but to see this as the full meaning is to miss the best part of the verse.

Many of us have failed to see the meaning of this passage because of our limited concept of prayer. We have thought of prayer in terms of requesting God to do certain things for us or to do certain things in the hearts and lives of others. We have seen prayer like a needy child approaching a parent and presenting their need. We have failed to see that prayer is in reality a dialogue in which the needy child comes to the Father God and the Father God also coming to the needy child. We offer our petitions to God but we should also give God the opportunity to offer His petitions, suggestions, commandments, and directions to us.

I. Prayer is listening to God and listening for God.

Those who would pray effectively should pray often in private and should spend a considerable portion of that time in silence, waiting for God to speak. Prayer is not about us doing all of that talking. Prayer is also listening. God may use the scriptures to speak to us. He may use a phrase from a great hymn or perhaps an observation concerning the events of life. He may speak to us by laying on us such a burden of concern that we feel compelled to do His will.

Sunday, January 14, 2018

II. Prayer is hearing what God has to say.

Many of us make the sad mistake of rushing into the presence of God with our “grocery list” of requests, and we speak to Him as if we were the chief executive officer of a corporation and He was nothing more than a divine office boy. But we need to see God as the executive who has the right to give us guidelines, suggestions, and even orders.

As we read through the great prophetic books of the Old Testament, we find over and over the indictment brought against the people that they would not heed to what God was saying to them. In this twenty-first century, we are guilty of the same sin. That is the reason much of our prayer efforts fail to accomplish anything either in our lives or in the lives of others.

Sunday, January 21, 2018

III. Prayer is consenting to what God says.

The call for repentance basically is a call to agree with God concerning all the issues and values we face in life. To repent is to change the mind, to alter the attitude, to accept a new philosophy and a new scale of values for your life. When this basic change in our attitude toward God, self, sin, others, and things takes place, a radical transformation in our conduct and activities is the result. Are we like stubborn and unthinking children who turn a deaf ear to the wise counsel of the Father who is eager to communicate to us His good and perfect will?

Sunday, January 28, 2018

IV. Prayer is asking God for both the disposition and the energy to obey His will.

The fields are white unto harvest. We do not have to persuade the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers. Rather, we should ask the Lord of the harvest concerning what portion of the field He wants us to work in for the harvest of souls. He is ready to give each of us directions concerning our participation in harvesting the fields that are white unto harvest.

What is prayer? Prayer is listening to God, and hearing what God has to say. Prayer is also agreeing with what God says and asking God for the power to obey Him in every area of life.