

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Thessalonians 5

EXTRA READING: Canons of Dort, III/IV, art 7 (page 107)

SINGING: 126:1-5 – 60:1-5 – 188:1-4 – 401:1-4

INTRODUCTION: Prayer-life is the barometer of spiritual life!

PRIVATE PRAYER

I. EXPRESSION OF THANKFULNESS II. MEANS FOR SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS

I. PRIVATE PRAYER AS THE MAIN EXPRESSION OF OUR THANKFULNESS

A. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

1. Not because we will earn salvation by multitudes of prayers

2. Not because we will change God's sovereign will through prayer

a. Job 23:13-17; Matt. 26:39

3. Because it is commanded by the King: Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17

4. Because private prayer most personal way of worshipping Him

a. in private prayer we verbalize our worship of praise (Ps. 145)

b. in private prayer we express our thanksgiving to God (Ps. 95, 100)

- sacrifice of praise is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name

- thanksgiving is not dependent upon circumstances (Daniel 6:10)

- every detail of His common grace is worthy of thanksgiving

- each aspect of His saving grace is worthy praise Him for all day

B. Is this an area where your repentance and confession is needed?

1. Examine prayer life in these two aspects: doxology & thanksgiving

2. Examine whether your focus is on your needs or even lusts (James 4:3)

3. What must I do to change?

- a. Have you set aside a daily period of ‘closet time?’ (Daniel 6)
- b. Are you ‘reading and meditating’ with an eye on praising God?
 - Reading and meditation are parents of prayer: Ps. 40:5

II. PRIVATE PRAYERS IS GOD’S MEANS TO INCREASE OUR SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS

- A. Spiritual barrenness is generally fruit of sinful neglect in spiritual duties
 1. Prov. 13:4 *The soul of the diligent shall be made fat*
 2. Prov. 14:14 *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways!*
 3. Prov. 2:1-9 *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, then shall thou understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

- B. Spiritual fruitfulness personally and as church is sovereignly linked to prayer
 1. Consider God’s promises and direction in Ezek. 36:37

 2. Consider God’s generous commitment in Ps. 81:10-16

 3. Consider Acts 2-4: *they came together in one accord to pray*

APPLICATION:

- A. Examine your priorities in life!
 1. Haggai called in God’s Name to *consider your ways!*

 2. Jesus pointed out that *first His Kingdom and then all other needs*

- B. Examine your priorities in prayer!

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

Those blessings are sweetest that are won with prayer and worn with thanksgiving. (Thomas Goodwin)

All my discoveries have been made in answer to prayer. (Isaac Newton)

Genuine prayer will be looking out for answers. (William Plumer)

When we shoot an arrow, we look to the fall of it. When we send a ship to sea, we look for the return of it. When we sow seed, we look for the harvest of it. So

when we bring our prayers before God's heart, shall we not look for an answer?
(Richard Sibbes?)