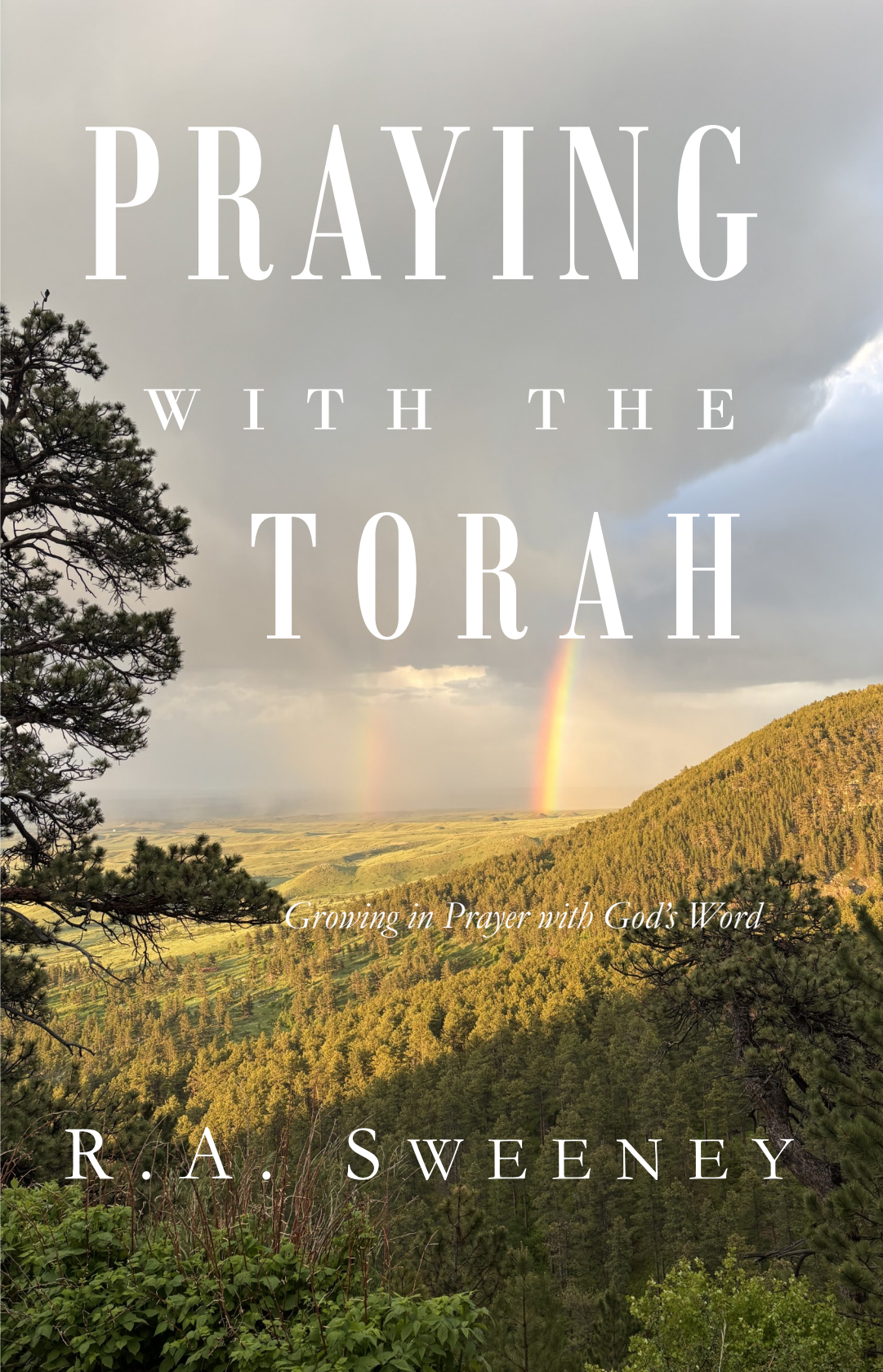


A scenic landscape photograph serves as the background. It features a wide, green valley filled with dense evergreen forests. In the distance, a bright rainbow arches across the sky, which is filled with soft, grey clouds. The foreground is partially obscured by the dark, silhouetted branches of a pine tree on the left and some green foliage at the bottom. The overall mood is peaceful and inspirational.

PRAYING

W I T H T H E

T O R A H

Growing in Prayer with God's Word

R . A . S W E E N E Y

PRAYING WITH THE TORAH

Growing in Prayer with God's Word

R.A. SWEENEY



Davek Le'lohim
Books

Copyright © 2026 Davek Le'lohim Books

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced, distributed, or transmitted by any means, including photocopying, recording, taping, or any other electronic or mechanical method without the prior written permission of the author.

This work is non-fiction. Unless otherwise noted, the author and publisher make no guarantees as to the accuracy of the information contained in this publication.

Davek Le'lohim Books may be ordered through booksellers.

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any web addresses or links contained in this publication may have changed since the date of publishing and may no longer be valid.

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Content within quotation marks that is not specifically cited or noted is the author's paraphrase.

All artwork in this book is owned solely by Davek Le'lohim Books.

ISBN: 979-8-2955-9726-8 (sc)

ISBN: 979-8-2956-3092-7 (hc)

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I have often considered the idea of writing a book. I have such a passion for my God and love to talk about Him, but I always felt incompetent for the enterprise. My wife had the idea of compiling this book. I did not set out to write this book but am actually putting together individual prayers I wrote over the course of a little over a year.

I started these prayers as part of a ministry at the church I attended at the time. My local church was looking for someone to take over and develop its prayer ministry. I knew my own prayer life was lacking, so I volunteered to lead the ministry in order to challenge myself to grow in the discipline. After about a year leading this ministry, I began the task of putting out a weekly prayer invitation in email. My goal was to lead us through the prayers in the whole Bible, to pray with the prayers shown in Scripture, and to learn from the prayers we see presented in the text. Obviously, some of the prayers here are heavily influenced by the events of the times in which they were written, and often I was sidetracked from this progression by direction from the Spirit. Over the course of the next year, we finished the prayers of the Torah. About a year later, I am now compiling these prayers together to share.

It is important to note that this collection

represents how I was moved to pray at the times I wrote them. I am not saying these are the most appropriate ways to pray these passages or the only way. Nor am I claiming, in this collection, to be revealing the meaning or purpose of these passages. This collection is merely an honest look at how I was moved to lead a local church congregation in prayer at a set period of time.

As you read these prayers, I hope you are blessed. I would encourage you to spend time reading the passages discussed in these prayers and the passages surrounding them. I would encourage you to approach the texts and prayers in different ways. Try covering large chunks of Scripture and multiple prayers at a time. Try spending a week or two with a single prayer. My hope would be that this helps you grow in prayer, that this develops your craving for prayer, that this helps you become better and more developed in prayer, and that this grows your passion and interest in studying the Scriptures and praying through them.

I pray you would be blessed with a deeper and more meaningful relationship with our God.

Blessed are You, LORD, a King to be praised in adoration!

~ A Traditional Ancient Jewish Prayer of Praise for the
God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob¹

INTRODUCTION

Jewish and Christian people would agree that prayer is critically important to a faithful walk with the God of the Bible. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, “A Christian without prayer is just as impossible as a living person without a pulse.”¹ Many people are great about praying and will tell you how critical and shaping the practice can be. Others are bad about making prayer a habit or practice but will typically admit they know they need to pray more.

The doctrine of prayer can be confusing. The idea of coming to God in prayer almost seems like an action showing a lack of faith. After all, if God is who He claims to be, then doesn’t He already know what I need? If God is good, wouldn’t asking Him to change His plan be wrong? Wouldn’t a complete trust in God mean that I don’t need to talk to Him?

Yet the Scriptures seem to point in the complete opposite direction. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing.² Jesus talked about prayer all the time. He just assumed we would pray and explained how to do it. He taught us to be bold in prayer. He taught us to be persistent in prayer. He taught us a model for prayer. He modeled a prayer life for us. He prayed all the time. He asked for things. He asked God to change His plan.

So how do we reconcile these things? I love a quote attributed to Soren Kierkegaard: “The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.”³ His view is that prayer is an endeavor God has given us in order to grow us. But then how do we view the intercessory prayers we find in Scripture? I think Kierkegaard’s view is accurate but not complete.

My understanding is that, when we view our relationship with God similar to a parent-child relationship, we get a better picture of prayer. A child can come to a parent with needs, concerns, and questions. A child can come to a parent when scared, excited, or confused. When we come to God in prayer, we need a faith-filled heart and need to be seeking Him. We can ask for things, knowing He will give what is good. We can question things, knowing that we don’t understand but want to understand. We can ask Him to do what we ask, knowing He is generous and good. We can intercede or lament, praise or question. All of it builds a relationship. It is more than changing our nature as Kierkegaard suggests. It is the very act of walking with God.

The goal is not to change anything but to engage in a relationship and spend time together. How weird would it be to spend a life in marriage without talking? We don’t communicate with our spouses because we need to change them or don’t trust them to love us. We speak in order to enjoy each other and grow in closeness to each other. How weird would it be to spend the entire time

children are in the home without talking to them? How is there any love or relationship without communication? In the same way, how weird to begin an eternity of relationship with God by spending this life without prayer: not because we seek what He can give us, but because we want to pursue Him and build a relationship with Him.

The question then remains: How? Jesus gave an example in the Lord's prayer, but even those indwelt with the Holy Spirit do not know how to pray like we ought.⁴ For this reason, I do not claim in this text that there are right and wrong ways of praying. I am rather inviting you to enter the prayer lives of those in the Scriptures. I am inviting you to see what they prayed with eyes focused on their prayers. I am inviting you to see how they prayed. I am inviting you to pray along with them. I am inviting you to learn and grow in your prayer life through their example, but I am also inviting you to see the blessing in their prayer lives and lay claim to the joy that the early followers of God would often cling to precisely because of their prayers. I am inviting you to grow in your relationship with Him through an enriched prayer life by learning from the prayers given to us in the Bible. And we know that if we pray in sincerity, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us.

So finally, I will encourage you to grow with the words of this hymn:

*O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless shame we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*⁵

GENESIS

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

~ Genesis 1:27-28

Genesis 2:23

I was impressed by the first prayer we see in Scripture. In Genesis 2, in response to receiving Eve from God, Adam prayed, “At last this is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ because she was taken out of man.” What an amazing prayer! Notice that Adam was sinless and had perfect fellowship with God. God saw Adam’s need and provided a perfect blessing for Adam’s need. Adam responded with perfect gratitude. He recognized what he had received and celebrated and cherished the blessing. I also love that prayer in Scripture starts with thanksgiving.

In our fallen state, we cannot recognize the fullest extent of how we have been blessed in every way. Let us pray. Let us pray with grateful hearts. Let us pray that God would show us the extent to which we have been blessed and would open our eyes and hearts to the ways in which we should be grateful. Let us give Him the glory He deserves.

*At last! This is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh!*

~ Genesis 2:23 (author’s translation)

Genesis 3:10–13

What a stark contrast we see between the first and second prayers in the Scriptures! The first is this beautiful picture of joy and thanksgiving when a perfect gift was given in a perfect relationship. The second is the responses Adam and Eve offered to God's questions about them eating the fruit. Originally, I did not even include this prayer because it is unrecognizable as a prayer, but I changed my mind, because it is communication between humans and God.

I think the most striking part of this prayer is the impact of sin on our relationship with God and our prayer lives. I think of Psalm 66:18 and 1 Peter 3:7 both pointing out that sin inhibits our prayers. I think it is important to begin times of prayer with petition for humility and forgiveness.

Let us pray with humble hearts. Let us pray for forgiveness for our sins. Let us not rest only in a past forgiveness we have received but also rest in the continual forgiveness we receive through a continual repentance. Let us ask for mercy as we approach a merciful God, and then delight in the relationship that comes from forgiveness.

*If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would
not have listened.*

~ Psalms 66:18 (NLT)

Genesis 4:13–14

As we continue through Scripture, looking at the prayers that we see modeled for us, the third one I see is from an unlikely source: Cain. We look at Cain as the representation of sin manifesting itself in the world. And we look at the murder of Abel as the only thing worth examining about him. But he offers perhaps the most universally relatable prayer in the Bible. God cursed Cain for the murder of Abel, and Cain cried out to God, “My punishment is too great to endure!” (verse 13). He then went on to grieve over his condition. And among the complaints is the lament, “I will be hidden from Your face” (verse 14).

In this prayer, the entirety of our need is summarized. We have sinned against the Author of the universe. We are hidden from His face. The punishment for our sin is beyond what we can bear on our own. This prayer sets the stage for the entire Gospel—that while we were hidden from His face, He pursued us to reconciliation. While our punishment was too great for us to endure, He endured the wrath because He loves us too much to abandon us to our punishment.

This prayer is simple. We all find ourselves in one of two places. Either we are in the place from where Cain cried out, aching under the burden of our sin, or we have received the salvation for which Cain had begged and have been reconciled. First, I would ask that we pray for God to reveal our hearts in this. While there is security in

our salvation, there is too much at stake and too much Scripture warning about people being deceived about their salvation to take our confidence in our salvation lightly. We need to be sure, and God is the only One who can reveal our hearts to us in the way we need.

If we find ourselves in the first condition, under the just wrath for our sin, let us cry out to the Savior who is both able to save and delights in salvation. Confess our sins. Turn from our wickedness. Trust in Him alone. Move from being an object of wrath to a cherished son. (I don't include "daughter" because in the Hebrew culture a daughter was not viewed with the same value. While I think God puts equal value on all humans, the language of the Scriptures gives a higher blessing to the son.) He has done the work. We just need to allow Him to work in us.

If we find ourselves in the second condition, where the salvation from this wrath has been applied to us (even if just this very moment), let us rejoice in the God of our salvation. Let us praise Him for the transformation He has achieved in our lives. Let us pray He would open our eyes to the suffering from which we have been delivered and to recognize that same suffering in those around us. Let us pray that our hope and our joy would not be privatized and hidden, but that we would openly rejoice in our God and tell people about His goodness.

Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!"

~ Genesis 4:13–14 (NLT)

Genesis 15:2–8

Genesis 15 is the next real prayer that I notice in the Bible. It starts out with God promising Abram a “very great” reward. Abram’s response in verses 2 and 3, at first glance, strikes me as a little snarky: “. . . LORD God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? . . . Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir.” What a bold response to a promise of blessing from the Lord God of Hosts. It seemed he was basically saying, “Yeah, whatever God, what could you give me that is really that great?” But when you look at the passage, you can tell that this isn’t a snarky response, but a response rooted in confusion. Abram knew by this point in his life that God blesses bountifully. He knew that God gives great and wonderful things. But he also knew that life is fleeting, and tangible things are vanity.

He wasn’t coming to God with an attitude that didn’t really appreciate the offer; he was confused about what God could give that was truly meaningful. He was being honest with God: “Lord, I do not see the blessing in more things.” He was also honest about what he actually felt like he was lacking: children. God responded by promising abundant children, and He went on to promise that Abram’s family would possess the land. Once again, Abram came honestly before God and asked how he would know he would possess the land.

In a passage that shows Abram frequently questioning God's promises, you see that Abram's belief in God's promises was credited to him as righteousness (verse 6). Clearly these were not prayers with a sinful heart or instances of Abram being snarky. But rather, this was someone who trusted the Lord but had questions. I picture a child holding a parent's hand as they walk somewhere. The child is coming along and clearly trusts the parent. But the questions: "Where are we going?" "What are we doing?" "Where is mama?" and about a hundred thousand others are flying all over the place. There is no lack of trust, just intimate questions.

This reminds me of the Disciples on seemingly every page of the Gospels. Jesus was going somewhere or talking to someone or teaching something or doing whatever He was doing at that moment, and it went completely over the Disciples' heads. They just didn't understand. They clearly trusted Jesus, but in their confusion, they asked honest questions.

We have questions. We do not understand things. We struggle at times. Let us pray that we would be honest with God in the same way that Abram was here. Let us honestly confess our sins and our shortcomings, the ways in which we do not trust God like we should. Let us pray our struggles to God and be honest about what we feel we are lacking and how we are struggling. Let us open our hearts to God (He knows the deepest intentions of the heart anyway.) and enjoy the intimacy of deep, honest time with our Lord.

Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

~ Genesis 15:2–3

Genesis 16:7–14

I am enjoying these early prayers in Genesis. They are so simple and yet so profound. Continuing on our progression, we come to Genesis 16, when Hagar fled from Sarai after she got pregnant. Sarai had been abusing her and treating her poorly, so she ran away. The angel of the Lord asked her what was going on, and her honest response was that she was fleeing from Sarai (probably sinfully when you consider scriptural directions on submitting to masters). She simply confessed what she was doing. She didn't try to hide what was going on. She didn't try to sugarcoat it. She saw God reach out to her, and she poured out her heart.

What is interesting is that God didn't offer to fix the problem, He just revealed the end. He told her to go back and suffer the abuse. There was no promise that the abuse would change. And logic would tell you that it would get worse, and it did. The angel of the Lord promised that she would bear a son, and that God would bless him. This sounds like a bit of a raw deal—go get beaten and mistreated, but in the end it will be fine. Most of us would think, “No thanks God! I'm getting while the getting is good.” But after the promises were made, Hagar called on the Lord and praised Him. She named Him “You are a God who sees me” (verse 13) because God saw her in her distress and revealed Himself to her for her good. For her, it was enough that God saw her (Think John 1:48.) and knew her strife.

Let us pray for faith and perseverance like Hagar. Let us pray that God would work in our hearts so that we would rest on His promises the way Hagar did. And that we would stand firm in His promises like Hagar did. Let us pray that we would surrender our lives to the God who sees and has promised good like Hagar did. And that we would surrender our rights in order to serve the One who sees all injustice and will reward those who sacrifice for Him like Hagar did. Let us pray that we would persevere in the struggles He calls us to because of the joy set before us in Him like Hagar did. Let us pray that this radical confidence in Him would pour out of us to the point that the Gospel goes forth mightily to every people, nation, tribe, and tongue through specific mission trips, but also through the moment by moment ministries of our lives.

So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

~ John 4:28–30

Genesis 17:1–22

Continuing on brings us to a difficult prayer in Genesis 17. God promised Abraham would have a son through Sarah. Most of us will remember that Sarah laughed at the idea, and some will remember that Abraham laughed at the idea here in verse 17. Both thought that God's plan was either impossible (probably not the case) or ridiculous (seemingly more likely). Every time I have read this, it always occurred to me that both Abraham and Sarah were doubting God would fulfill the promise, but I think I have been wrong, at least in Abraham's case. Verse 17 does not say that Abraham laughed in God's face but that he fell on his face and laughed. He fell on his face first. He worshipped. He believed God, though he seems to have found the plan humorous.

Abraham also offered an alternative plan to God that would be simpler. The gentleness of God's response suggests that God was not angry or displeased. This suggests that Abraham was not doubting but wanted the plan to be easier. We all do this sometimes. We are so smart in our own eyes that we think we might have better plans than God. And seemingly, God is willing to consider our ideas. Here, God *didn't* agree to follow Abraham's suggestion but *did* agree to bless Ishmael (which turned out to be problematic for Isaac's descendants). I also think of Ezekiel's request in Ezekiel 4:12–15. (I find this story hilarious.) This is not a situation

where God gives the plan, Abraham rebels against the plan, and sin runs rampant. This is a situation where God gives the plan, Abraham receives the plan in faith but asks God for clarification, and God gently responds with more information.

I think too often we get too invested in our own plans. We can get spun up with our plan not coinciding with God's plan, and we create this struggle, "Here is what I want, so I need to do everything I can to force God to allow this to happen." If we rest in the promises of God, that He is good and He works all things for good, that He wants to bless us, and that He will not settle for second best for us, then our perspective can change. We can come humbly and faithfully to God and tell Him our wants and our desires, and He will give us what is good. He will guide us through His plan and reveal Himself to us through it. There is no greater picture of this than Jesus in Gethsemane: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."¹

Let us pray that God would quiet our minds and satisfy our souls. Let us pray that we would seek our fulfillment primarily and solely through Him. Let us offer our desires to God honestly and humbly and allow Him to work in our lives to show us how He meets every desire in better ways than we could ask or imagine. Let us hear what He calls us to and obey joyfully.

*I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.
I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly.*
~ Genesis 17:1–2

Genesis 18:1–5

The next prayer that I came to in Scripture is in the beginning of Genesis 18. This one made me a little sick with shame as I read it. Abraham was taking a rest in the shade because it was hot out, and then he saw God in the distance. He ran to meet them, bowed down and said,

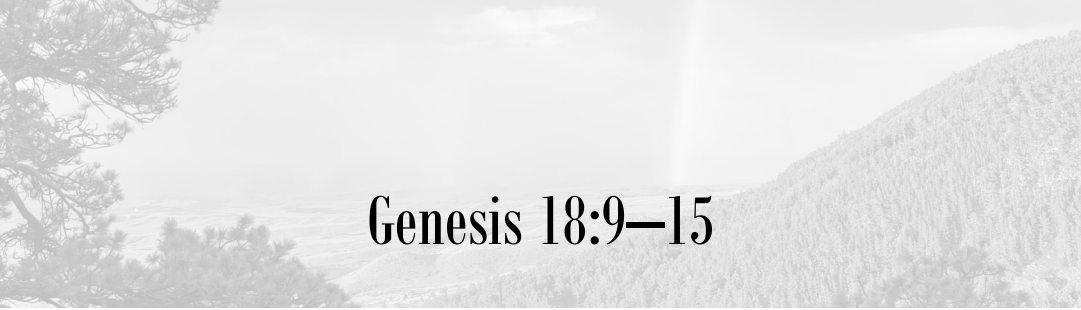
My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.

This is a simple prayer but a deep prayer: “God please spend even a short while with me! I will give whatever I have, do whatever I can, but Lord, I am desperate for Your presence, even for a moment!” Abraham sprinted to meet Him and fell down at God’s feet begging for His presence. Ouch. When was the last time we were that desperate? Too often we flip this around. We say, “Here I am God. Come running at my call. Here are my feet for You to bow down. If You bless me enough, I will throw a little, tiny piece of my attention to You.” Read Job 26:7–14, Psalm 78:40–67, or seemingly any part of the first thirty-six chapters of Ezekiel, and then try feeling good about having that attitude toward the Living God.

Let us pray with desperation. Let us desire God, not His blessings, but His presence. God has not implemented prayer as a method to get things or manipulate His will but to have fellowship with Him. Let us seek His face and His presence and draw near to Him in intimate prayer.

*Again and again they tempted God,
And pained the Holy One of Israel.
They did not remember His power,
The day when He redeemed them from the adversary,
When He performed His signs in Egypt
And His marvels in the field of Zoan,
And turned their rivers to blood,
And their streams, they could not drink.*

~ Psalm 78:41–44



Genesis 18:9–15

Abraham's lunch with God led into a strange discourse between God, Abraham, and Sarah. As it unfolded, God's conversation with Abraham morphed into a conversation with Sarah. I have heard the focus of this passage explained that God was critiquing Abraham's leadership as husband, but I think that pushes more of an egalitarian perspective than I think the Bible ever portrays.

For me, I couldn't help thinking of Mary and Martha when Jesus was teaching in their home. One sister was busy working for Jesus while the other was busy being in His presence.² Sarah had been cooking during this whole story, while Abraham had been hanging out with God the whole time. Martha, the worker, made a bit of a faux pas and Mary had the blessing. In this story Sarah made a faux pas. I think the exchange with Abraham is meant to be a blessing as God revealed His character to Abraham by how He dealt with Sarah, with justice but also patience.

This inspired me to simply be in prayer. So often we are busy working in prayer. We pray for people or for ministries or mission trips or problems or concerns. We pray praises and rejoice in prayer over things. We talk about how we “need” to be in prayer. But we “get to” pray. God welcomes us into His presence in prayer, and we get the privilege of being with Him. Let's not miss that today.

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

~ Luke 10:38-42

Genesis 18:22–33

We come to the next prayer in Scripture at the end of Genesis 18 as God turned His sights on Sodom. God's mercy and man's sinfulness blow me away in this passage. God said He was going to see if things were as bad as the outcry to Him sounded and said, "and if not, I will know" (verse 21). God, from the start, indicated that He was going to punish only if the sin was really bad, and that He would know whether it was or not (because He knows everything). Of course, He knew the sin was that bad, and of course He was planning to destroy Sodom because He knew it had come to this. But He made a special, bodily trip to Sodom and told Abraham He was investigating and only going to act if necessary. The only logical reason He would be doing this is for Abraham's sake. He was showing He is a God concerned with righteousness and concerned for people. He knew Abraham's beloved nephew was in Sodom and took Abraham to show him that He would be just and also merciful.

Abraham's prayer with God, starting in verse 23, is unexpected too. God said He would be just, and Abraham's continual question was, "Well, exactly how just will You be?" You can see the fear of the Lord in Abraham's questioning. He was faithful and humble but yet unsure of this God who was still fairly new and unknown to him. He started off with an obvious question

and then probed a little deeper each time into God's nature to see how He does these things (probably remembering the flood he had heard about with Noah). As he progressed through the questions (not questions of doubt or disobedience but of seeking to know and trust God), he stopped at ten righteous people.

Reading the passage, you would think he would ask about five and then probably one, but he stopped at ten. Verse 25 summarizes what Abraham was asking about. And seeing God's patient love and justice up to this point, Abraham finally realized that, in fact, the Judge of all the Earth will deal justly with surgical precision. God isn't cutting off hands because of hangnails. He is perfect in His justice and in His mercy but also in His wrath.

When was the last time we approached God with the pants-wetting fear that Abraham had here? In case it is unclear, we are the people of Sodom. Our sin is "exceedingly grave." We are not the righteous who would spare the city but the reason the city would come to destruction. If we have received Christ, we are redeemed from that station, but only by Him, not because we are any different from the people of Sodom. Do we have this fear?

Let us come to the Lord in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Let us seek to know and understand the Lord in the way that Abraham did here. Let us trust in the promises that God makes to us. Let us pray for God

to be just and merciful to a world that needs His justice and mercy, not because He won't behave that way, but because we are called to be a part of the application of His justice and mercy. Let us pray for Him to glorify His name.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

~ Philippians 2:12

Genesis 20:1–7

The next prayer we see in Scripture comes in Genesis 20. (I skipped Lot's petition to the angels in the destruction of Sodom because I didn't feel they were directed so much at God as they were to the angels.) Abimelech had taken Sarah to be his wife, and God told him that He was going to kill him for it. Abimelech prayed to God begging for mercy but much more for God to act according to His nature. Abimelech took Sarah without *knowing* who she was, and God was going to kill him *because* of who she was. So, Abimelech asked God to be just. He implied that God knows hearts and judges based upon hearts. He asked God to examine his heart to determine his guilt. His prayer was that God would act according to God's attributes. Abimelech was, in a sense, asking for the courage to believe God is who He says He is.

When was the last time we prayed that prayer? When was the last time, when faced with uncertainty, we actually went to God and said, "I know who You are. Help me to believe it in a way that pours out into my life!" Let that be our prayer.

"In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me."

~ Genesis 20:5–6

Genesis 20:17–18

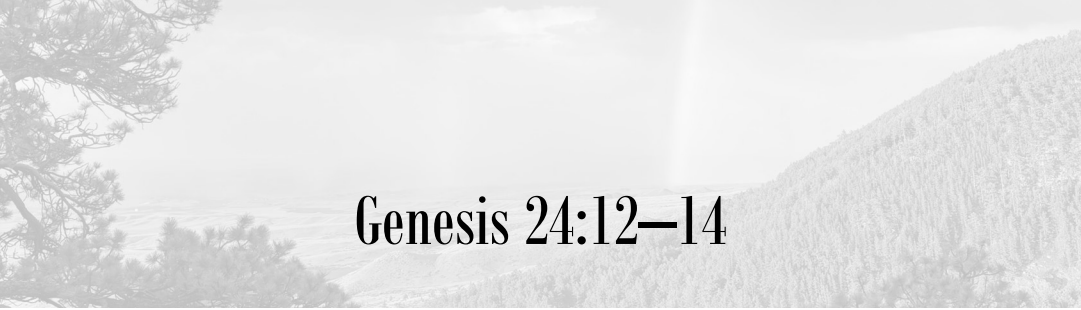
We see another prayer at the end of Genesis 20. The words are not recorded, but the context is. Abimelech had been cursed. He was condemned. His people were going to die. Abraham prayed, and God removed the curse and healed them of their affliction.

The people around us are cursed by sin. They are condemned in their sin. People are suffering and dying because of sin. Abraham prayed when he saw this situation, but do we? If we truly believe that sin has cursed all mankind and condemned them to death and is wreaking havoc on this world; if we truly believe that the only fix for this situation is through a perfect Savior willing to substitute Himself for us; if we truly believe that Jesus has fulfilled this purpose and delights in forgiving the repentant; if we truly believe that the heart of man is so desperately sick that this repentance can only be achieved by a working of the Holy Spirit; then there is no other response than to pray for the lost around us.

Let us pray for the people around us. Let us pray for a mighty working of the Spirit in our community and in this world to draw hearts to repentance. Let us pray specifically by name for those around us in need of a Savior to save them from their sins. Pray for the lost to come to salvation to the glory of God.

Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

~ Genesis 20:17–18



Genesis 24:12–14

The next prayer I read in Scripture is in Genesis 24. Abraham's servant was looking for a wife for Isaac. It is clear from the way the servant prayed and acted that he took the responsibility very seriously because he clearly loved his master very dearly. Whether he was overwhelmed or just very God-seeking is not clear to me, but he had a task that he found important. So, he prayed. His prayer has always struck me as bold. He asked for a very specific set of circumstances. The interesting thing is it was all about God showing favor to Abraham. Essentially, he was saying, "Because you love Abraham, please be very clear about whom to pick so Abraham's family will be blessed as you have promised."

I wonder how often we skip praying because we do not see the importance of an event; however, God calls us to pray without ceasing and to pray in all circumstances. We often avoid asking for specifics like the servant did here. If we believe that God hears our prayers and answers them for our good and His glory, then why can't we ask for specifics? The servant didn't ask for a specific outcome, but asked God to make His will clear in specific ways. How often do we ask God to be clear like this?

Let us pray with specificity. Let us ask boldly for clear, recognizable answers to our prayers so that we can follow faithfully.

*He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham,
please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my
master Abraham."*

~ Genesis 24:12

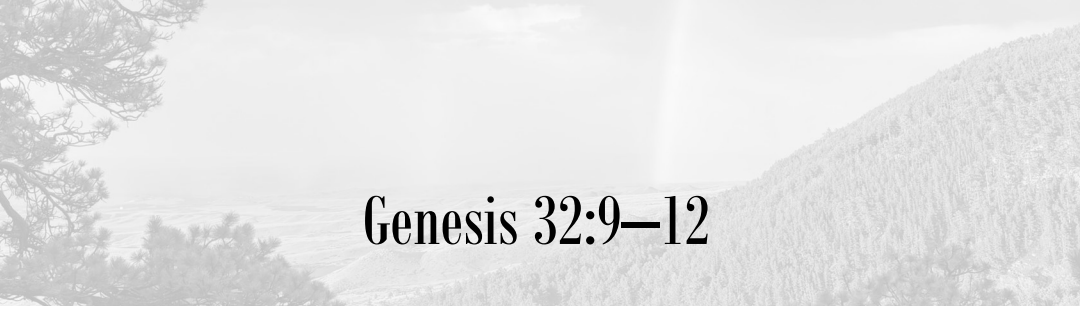
Genesis 25–32

As I was preparing for this prayer, something interesting occurred to me. We see Abraham praying regularly, and we see the servant praying for a wife for Isaac. But I didn't find a single recorded instance of Isaac praying. The one exception might be the blessing he gives to Jacob, but even in that, it doesn't seem super oriented toward God. After all the prayer we have looked at in the first half of Genesis, we see the entire life of one of the fathers of Israel pass without a single recorded instance of prayer. We see Isaac repeat his father's sins. We see God bless Isaac immensely. But we do not see Isaac pursuing God. This is not to say that he didn't, but just that we do not see it.

This breaks my heart a little because I want my legacy to be that people remember me as someone who prayed, who sought God's face. Let us pray. Pray for big things. Pray for little things. Pray formal prayers. Pray impromptu prayers. Pray alone. Pray together. Pray with family. Pray with friends. Pray. Let our lives be filled with prayer, so that our lives don't cover fifteen chapters of Scripture without a single prayer. Pray, so that we can enjoy our Father and the time He has given us to come to know Him.

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.

~ James 4:2–3



Genesis 32:9–12

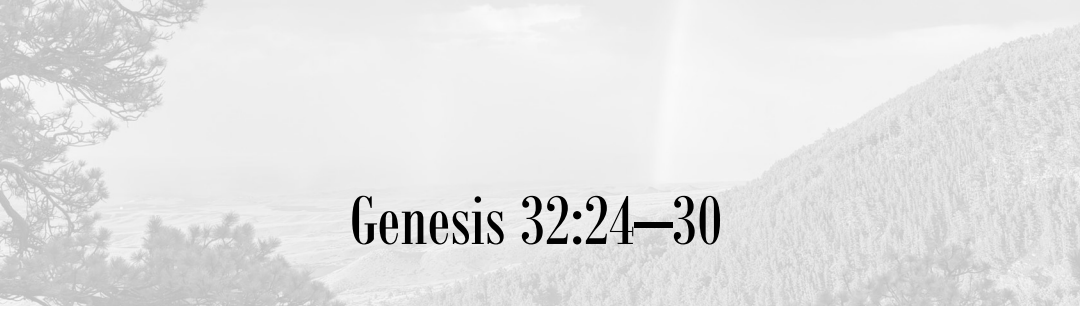
The next prayer that I found in Scripture is upon Jacob's return from obtaining his wives. He had stolen everything from Esau and was worried his brother was coming to kill him. Here, Jacob came to God seeking refuge, but most of his prayer was praising God, confessing sin, and repeating God's word back to Him. Jacob confessed his unworthiness for all the favor he had already received and for any additional favor going forward. He offered praise to God for the mercy and grace he had received in the increase of his wealth and position. He then asked for protection. He sandwiched his prayer with God's Word though. He was not basing his prayer on who he was or what he wanted or needed. Rather, he based it on God's character and God's Word. He said (paraphrasing), "You, God, have told me You would do this, so I am asking You to do what You have said You would."

We have a well-developed picture of the character of God from the Scriptures. He has demonstrated He is not the kind of God to leave us or forsake us. He has demonstrated that we have security in Him. He has demonstrated that He will speak through us when we are called to give account of the Gospel. He has demonstrated that we will receive rewards for sacrificing for Him. So many more demonstrations fill the pages of Scripture.

Let us pray with these demonstrations of God's character in mind. Let us pray boldly. Let us pray confidently. Let us pray, in both big and small things, that we would live according to His call based on His promises.

Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,' I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. For You said, 'I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.'"

~ Genesis 32:9-12



Genesis 32:24–30

I wrestled (pun intended) with the next prayer in Scripture. Jacob was still awaiting his reunion with Esau and was up late, no doubt out of concern. Scripture makes no introduction to this, but simply says that a man wrestled with Jacob all night (seems odd), and Jacob just hung onto the man and wouldn't let go. We find out later that the man was actually God. Jacob's prayer, if you can call it that, was simply that he would not let go of God until God blessed him. This is an interesting prayer and a confusing one.

To keep it simple and within the portion of this that I do feel confident about, the picture is of a man clinging to God, desperate for God's blessing, and refusing to let go until the need is fulfilled. I don't know if this picture translates one-to-one to our situation, but the picture is powerful. We are in desperate need of God, but we rarely acknowledge or act like we are in need. God has promised blessings, but we do not seek, let alone cling to, Him.

Let us pray in desperation. Ask God to humble our hearts and open our eyes to the desperate need we are in. Ask God to humble our hearts to be desperate and to act desperate for Him. Ask God to remove the pride that tells us we can solve our own problems. God has promised to heal our sin and advance His Gospel to the ends of the Earth in order to purchase for Himself people

from every people, nation, tribe, and tongue. Ask God to bless us in that way and cling to Him until He fulfills it, rejoicing in the promise of what comes next after that mission is accomplished.

Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

~ Genesis 32:24-30

Exodus

Who is like You among the gods, O LORD?

*Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in praises, working wonders?*

*You stretched out Your right hand,
The earth swallowed them.*

*In Your lovingkindness You have led the people
whom You have redeemed;*

*In Your strength You have guided them to Your
holy habitation.*

*The peoples have heard, they tremble;
Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.*

*Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.*

*Terror and dread fall upon them;
By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless
as stone;*

*Until Your people pass over, O LORD,
Until the people pass over whom You have
purchased.
You will bring them and plant them in the
mountain of Your inheritance,
The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your
dwelling,
The sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have
established.
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.
~ Exodus 15:11–18*

Exodus 2:23–25

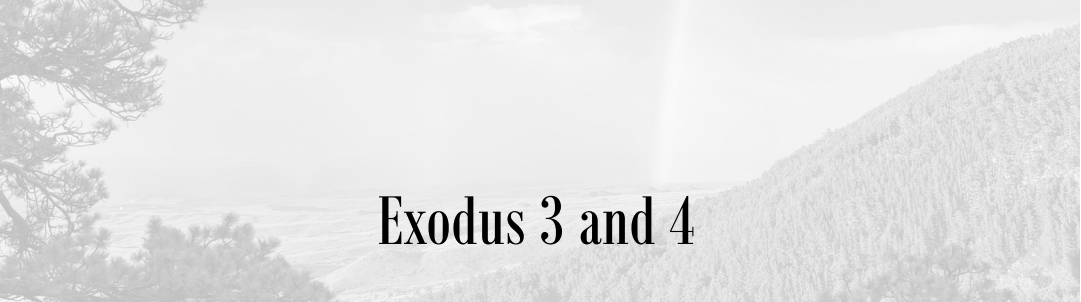
I love the prayer at the end of Exodus 2. The Israelite people in Egypt were being mistreated severely, and they cried out to the Lord corporately. The nation all lifted up prayers to God in their suffering.

We face issues in our current culture. Many are upset and frustrated about our political climate. Some are concerned about climate change. Others are suffering from the problems natural disasters are causing. There are some big problems facing the Global Church. When the Israelites suffered, they came together to beg God's mercy. Are we praying like this? Even if we are not troubled personally by challenges the Global Church is facing, are we recognizing the needs of the Church globally and crying out to God for His mercy on people we are called to love?

I love what the chapter says about the outcome of the prayer. The Israelites offered up an honest, faithful, God-seeking prayer. The Scriptures say that the prayers came before God, because they were made in truth and in faith. Do we pray in faith and in truth, and do we pray like we believe God will answer our prayers? I would suggest that we often don't.

They cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.

~ Exodus 2:23



Exodus 3 and 4

Exodus 3 starts a commonly known story of God speaking to Moses from the burning bush. God called Moses's name, and Moses started out strong with a perfect response: "Here I am."¹ Moses presented himself to God when God called, which I think is more than many people, including some Christians, would do. God calls us to go places we might not want to go, to do things we might not want to do, or to sacrifice things we might not want to sacrifice. But when God calls, we must present ourselves before Him rather than cowering away. God, please help us to present ourselves to You when You call, that we might be chosen instruments and serve to grow Your glory.

Moses's next response was a fair question in light of context: "Who should I tell them sent me?"² These people had lived for generations in a polytheistic culture in Egypt, where the Hebrew God was likely not a big part of their lives. The question is fair and honest. God, help us to pray honestly and in ways that truly seek to know You.

From there, Moses's questions began to move from honest questioning into more of a demonstration of either rebellion or lack of faith. God told Moses twice what He was going to do, and then Moses kept throwing up barriers. You can tell his questions became

inappropriate because in the fourth chapter (verse 14) you see God got angry.

God, please help us to seek You and to be open and honest in our prayers and questions, but also to have humble and obedient hearts eager to serve. Let us pray these prayers.

The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey,"

~ Exodus 3:7-8

Exodus 5:15–23

Progressing on through Exodus, we see two prayers (sort of) in chapter 5. God had called Moses to go to Pharaoh. And, rather than allowing the Israelites to go worship God, Pharaoh made their lives harder. The first prayer that you see is a sort of implied prayer. The Israelites were burdened more greatly, and they cried out. (Some translations gloss over this a bit.) The passage never mentions them praying to God, but Scripture repeats the message, from cover to cover, that God sees our affliction and hears our cries of distress. They might not have consciously prayed, but God heard nonetheless.

The second prayer is a prayer at the end of the chapter from Moses. He saw the affliction, heard the rebukes he was receiving from the Israelites, didn't see God accomplishing His goal, and Moses complained to God. God had given him the assignment, as well as told him how it was going to go, yet Moses was here lamenting and complaining because God was sticking to the plan rather than jumping to the end.

Let us pray to a God who sees and a God who hears. I am reminded of Hagar in the wilderness in awe that God would see her, or of Hannah, upon having a child, rejoicing that God had heard her prayers. Let us pray in this awe and rejoice with this great joy. Let us also pray in light of Moses's prayer. Let us pray for patience and for God to open our eyes during struggles, to see the

promises He has made. Let us pray for endurance to hold on to His promises when things seem bleak. Let us pray that we would not miss God at work, knowing that so often God's promise is not to fix things immediately but to be with us through the struggle. Walking with Him through the struggle is where unity with Him is grown.

God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

~ Genesis 15:13-14

Exodus 6:10–13

In Exodus 6, starting in verse 12, we see a prayer that almost makes no sense. At this point, God had called Moses to go back to Pharaoh to demand that he let the people go, and God had made promise after promise that He would fulfill and accomplish this, as well as how it would look. Moses's response was, "How is this going to work?" which makes you want to slap Moses because God had answered that question about 7,000 times by this point in the last few chapters. You also see God got angry with Moses for asking this question earlier on, so to read this now makes you cringe at the expectation of how God would respond. But verse 13 depicts a patient response from God as He fulfilled His promises.

The beauty in this prayer is that it should be incredibly encouraging for us. God has given us sixty-six books full of revelation of His character, yet we are so prone to forget and question. The picture here implies that Moses was not whining, complaining, or doubting but faithfully seeking an answer.

Let us pray for this same heart, not just a heart that knows the promises and obeys, but for a heart that seeks God in the questions and in the times we forget who He is. Let us pray for God to turn our hearts more toward Him and His Word.

*Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then
will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?*

~ Exodus 6:12

Exodus 8:12,30; 9:33; 10:13

It is interesting that, during the plagues of Egypt, you do not see much about prayer. Moses was in the middle of this unparalleled spiritual event, doing things most believers would never dream of being able to do, and yet you do not see much prayer. Instead, God commanded Moses, and Moses immediately acted and obeyed. That, in and of itself, is worth meditating on but not the focus of our prayer here.

The few times you see Moses pray in this passage, he “pleaded with the Lord” to stop the plagues when Pharaoh agreed to let the people go worship God in the wilderness. God had told Moses what was going to happen and how it would all work. When God was supposed to do what He had said, you see Moses praying, asking for God to fulfill His promise. God didn’t need the reminder. God hadn’t changed His mind and needed it changed back. Still Moses prayed to ask God to do what He had promised because he knew prayer was important.

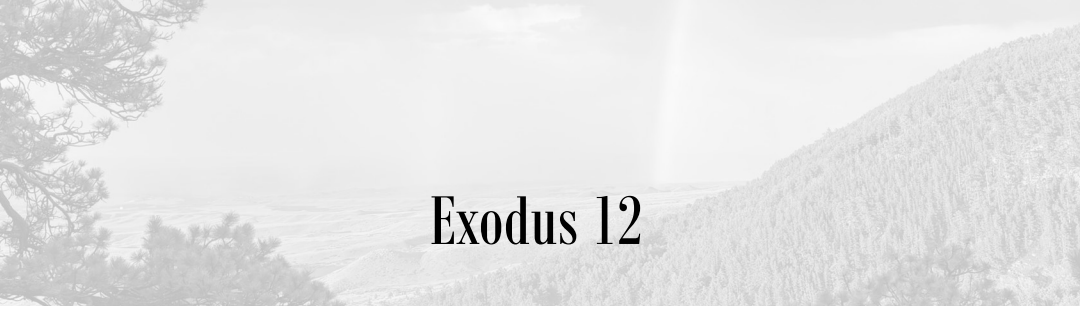
Prayer is often the means God has ordained to accomplish His will, meaning that sometimes the thing that causes His promises to be fulfilled is the prayers of the faithful. Prayer is how God allows us to participate in His plan and in His work. So, prayers like Moses prayed in these passages were a blessing to Moses, in that he was able to be an active participant in God’s plan and deliverance of these people.

Finally, prayer is not about asking *of* God or receiving *from* God. It is about being *with* God. Moses didn't pray because he needed to do anything in order for God to work. He prayed because he was desperate for God and desired fellowship with Him.

Let us pray with that attitude. Let us pray God's promises that He has made to us. Let us rejoice in the time God gives us to come into fellowship with Him and grow in intimacy with Him.

But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians.

~ Exodus 3:19-22



Exodus 12

Exodus 12 shows one of my favorite pictures of prayer: response. God had told the people through Moses that death would come upon every house, and He gave a way for the people of Israel to be spared. The people responded to God's word by listening to what He said and obeying. God made a way for their sins to be forgiven in order to spare them the wrath due them, and they lifted up a prayer of appeal to His mercy in the form of obedience. They killed the lambs. They painted the doors. Ultimately, they trusted God's mercy and His promise.

The prayer they lifted was for God to spare them, and they prayed that prayer in the form of trusting in His word and obeying. Sometimes, acting on God's promises requires us to move and do. Sometimes, it requires us to be still and wait. But when we trust God's promises to the point that they impact how we live our lives, there is an implicit prayer in that obedience, asking Him to fulfill the promises He has made.

Let us reflect on God's word and upon His promises to us. Let us pray prayers of obedience. Let us not only pray with our actions but with our thoughts, words, and hearts. Let us pray as though His Word makes an impact on our lives.

*Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as the LORD
had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.*

~ Exodus 12:28

Exodus 15:1–21

Reading through Exodus, after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, and the Egyptian army was destroyed, Moses stopped the people so they could sing praises to God. They sang about what He had done and about His character. It is awesome to see that, not only do we see prayers of “asking” in Scripture, but also prayers of “thanks.”

We often pray, asking for God to bless or for Him to provide or for Him to do, but rarely do we follow up with thanking God for providing. Rarely do we look in order to see God at work, and then rejoice over His power and share the joy with others. The point of Christian community is to walk through struggles together *and* rejoice in His triumphs together.

Let us pray with thankful hearts. Let us reflect on what God has done and offer thanksgiving. Let us look at what God is currently doing and give thanks. I have heard it said that the loneliest feeling in the world is feeling gratitude and having nowhere to put it, because joy is made complete when gratitude is expressed and shown. Let us show God the gratitude He deserves.

*The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will extol Him.*

~ Exodus 15:2

Exodus 15:22–27

Interestingly, the next prayer that I find as we work through Scripture lines up with part of a sermon I heard while I was writing this entry. (I will beg the mercy of the preacher, as I did not catch who it was.) Right after God granted deliverance through the Red Sea, the people were without water, and they began complaining. Moses then cried out to God to deliver them as they were waterless. God answered by, not only allowing Moses to fix the water that was bad, but also led them to a place where there were twelve good springs. There is so much to chew on in this passage, but let's focus on the prayer that Moses offered.

The point I caught in the sermon was that the difference between a complaint and a prayer can often be a single word. The people said, “We do not have water to drink, and we are dying!”³ This was a complaint. They focused on the problem and dwelled on it. Moses added one extra word: “God, we do not have water to drink, and we are dying!”⁴ This was a prayer. The focus was on God, and he had faith in Him. The one word changed the focus and the outcome.

Let us pray our complaints to God. Let us pray our fears to God. Let us pray our struggles to God. Let us take all the negative thoughts in our hearts captive and surrender them at the foot of the cross.

The LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

~ Exodus 15:25

Exodus 17:4–7

This chapter in Exodus gives us another picture of Moses trying to lead the people. At this point, things were heated. The people were angry and unruly. They were scaring Moses. What's worse, Moses seems to have been at his wit's end. It is hard to tell whether Moses was asking God for help leading the people or asking, in his frustration, for God to strike this people down. I think that ambiguity is a great place for us to start off in this prayer. Maybe Moses didn't even know what he wanted. He was perhaps scared. He was possibly angry. He was maybe confused. He was certainly desperate. And in all of that turmoil, he "cried out" to God. When he was at his end, he recognized his need for God to intervene.

I wonder how well we do this. Do we turn to God when we are stirred up like this, when we don't know what to do or even what to ask? Do we turn to God when we don't have the words and haven't even sorted out our own position? Is our knee-jerk reaction to an out-of-control situation to simply fall down before God and beg Him to intervene, to ask or show what is best and act upon it? Do we trust Him to be who He has promised to be and surrender it all to Him? Let us pray like that.

He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

~ Exodus 17:7

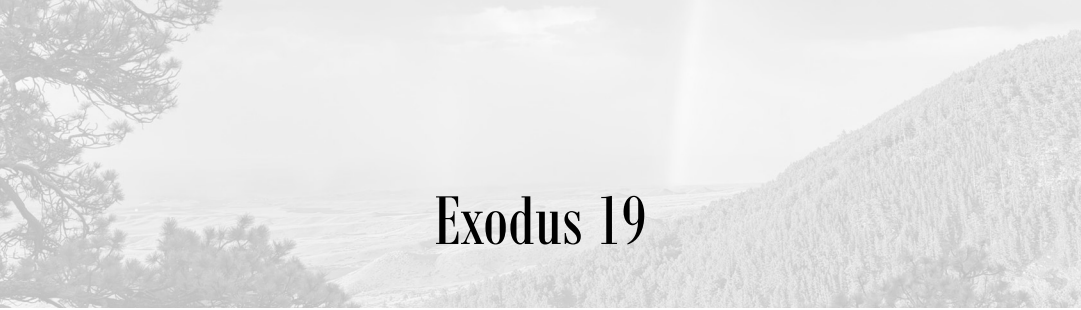
Exodus 18:9–12

The next prayer that I observe in the Scriptures is in Exodus 18. Moses met with his father-in-law and told him all that God had done with the Egyptians and in the wilderness. The father-in-law then responded by offering glory to God. He worshiped Him, confessed Him, and held Him above all the gods of the land. It is awesome that when people hear the testimony of God's work in other's lives, they begin to believe.

Let us pray that God would give us opportunity and boldness to share the work that He has done in our lives so that those around us would hear of His great works and turn to Him.

Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people.

~ Exodus 18:10–11



Exodus 19

Exodus 19 has some perspectives on prayer that we often do not consider. First, in verse 3, we read that Moses climbed the mountain to go up to God. There are sermons upon sermons to be preached about how Jesus came down the “mountain” to us rather than making us come up to Him, but with our focus on prayer, we see a picture of Moses laboring to interact with God. He was desperate for Him. He went out of his way to do it. He made the effort to encounter God because it is important.

How do we compare in our desperation for prayer? Moses climbed a mountain to interact with God when we just need to think thoughts or say words wherever we are and in whatever we are doing. Moses and Aaron had to consecrate themselves before hand while we can encounter God just as we are, having been consecrated by Christ’s blood. So how are we doing with our prayer? For me, I have a lot of room to grow.

In verse 8, we see Moses reported back to God what the people had said. He was interceding for the people. He was taking the situation the people found themselves in, the sacrifice they were offering, and lifting it up to God in communion with Him, trusting that God would take the offering and do great things with it. We see Moses interceding for the people in verse 23 as well. Moses again brought the condition of the people before God and asked Him to work.

Let us pray. Let us cast off our excuses and distractions. As Hebrews says, God has made the way for us, so let us take full advantage of the way He has made.⁵ Let us intercede on behalf of others as well. Let us pray for those who are struggling. Let us pray for those who are lost. Let us pray for those who are wayward. Let us lift others up to God to see His glory at work.

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. 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. 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.

~ Hebrews 4:14-16

Exodus 20:18–21

Exodus 20, starting in verse 18, has a perspective on prayer we often overlook or take for granted. The people saw God displaying His glory on the mountain and were terrified. They went to Moses and asked him to be an intermediary between them and God. Essentially, they were praying that there might be some distance between God and themselves. They knew they were sinful and were terrified to stand in the presence of a Holy God. They wanted to remain hidden from Him.

Today we face the same problem. We are sinful. We are unable to stand before a Holy God. We still need an intermediary to cover over our sins. We often forget this because an intermediary has been given to us in Jesus. Most of the book of Hebrews talks about Jesus being the fulfillment of this need for an intermediary to come before God for our sake and to cover over our sins.

Let us pray. Let us pray, keeping in mind our status as sinners deserving judgment. Let us pray, knowing that we pray to a Holy God, the Author of the universe. Let us pray, knowing we have an intermediary to cover our sin and stand between our sinfulness and the righteousness of God.

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.

~ Exodus 20:18

Exodus 24:7

In Exodus 24, I couldn't help but notice the repeated statement by the people that they would obey the commands of the Lord. They said this *to* Moses and offered it up to God *through* Moses. They had said it before this and will continue to say this later, but in just a small paragraph here in this chapter, they repeated it a couple times. It is interesting that the people's next recorded words are them asking Aaron to make the golden calf for them to worship in Exodus 32.

Prayer like this could be taking two forms. Given the behavior of the Israelites, it is possible they were repeating it in hope that they would eventually sound convincing. It is possible they knew that they had no intention of obeying but hoped that if they said they would obey enough that nobody would scrutinize their obedience. I think we frequently do this. We repeat the words or go through the motions to look like we are walking with God to hopefully convince ourselves or others that it is true.

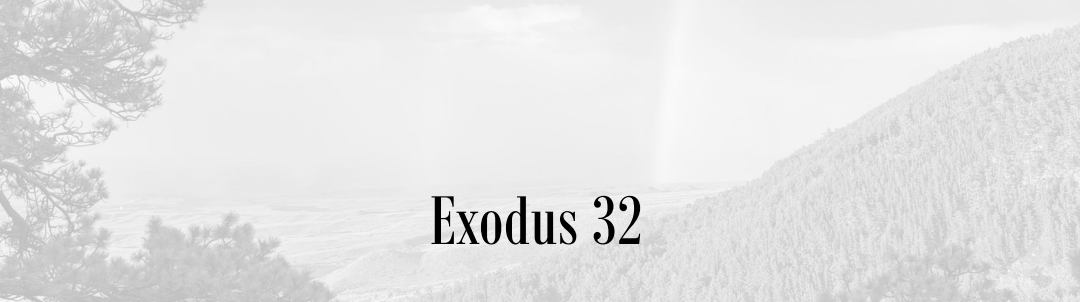
The other form this type of prayer could take is that of desperation. I think this is a very healthy perspective on prayer in that form. The Israelites were prone to forget. We are prone to forget. There is a need for a day by day, moment by moment reaffirming of the decision to follow and obey Christ. In that regard, we

need to be praying the prayer they offered up here: “We will obey.”⁶

Let us pray for the Spirit to show us where we are deceived. Let us pray for the Spirit to draw us to walk more deeply with Him. Let us pray, over and over, confessing our need for Him and asking Him to grant us obedience.

Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!” Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

~ Exodus 24:3-8



Exodus 32

Exodus 32 has a cool contrast of prayers. God's people, in their desire to worship God, came to Him in a way that He had not ordained or allowed. They were praying to God but according to their own terms and in their own way. Then, after the people made the golden calf, we see Moses's prayer of intercession. He was completely focused on God, rather than on himself or even the people. Moses is recorded as a great leader of God's people and was allowed a relationship with God like almost nobody else in Scripture. On the other hand, the people who focused on worshiping God on their own terms were killed by the priests.

Today we have this same problem. We dictate how we will worship or pray or serve. We decide which Scriptures to follow and which ones aren't as important. We serve with wrong motives. We pray with wrong motives. We read Scripture or worship or whatever else we do with wrong motives. This passage shows very clearly that God does not allow us to set the terms of how we approach Him.

Let us pray for humility before God. Let us pray that God would cast out all the ways we misunderstand how to walk with Him. Let us pray that God would drive out all selfishness and pride as we come before Him. Let us pray that God would allow us to approach Him in spirit and in truth.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”

~ Exodus 32:13

Exodus 33:11–16

Exodus 33 has another prayer of intercession, starting in verse 12, but I wanted to first touch on the description of prayer in verse 11: “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses, face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” What a cool description of Moses’s prayer life. They spoke face-to-face. They spoke as friends. It sounds like he spoke to God casually and without fear, with an intimacy and a safety. Moses would have been comfortable and at ease. Perhaps best of all, Moses would have heard what God was saying to him.

This reminds me of a children’s video that Saddleback Kids put out called *Moses and the Tent of Meeting*. It is a short little video, less than two minutes, but it shows Moses sitting inside the tent, just talking with the Glory of God. It is such an amazing picture of the relationship we can have with Him. It is definitely worth a watch.

I am not suggesting that formality and fear do not have their place in prayer, because they are critical. But there is beauty in what is depicted here. Moses came to God in a humble relationship. You see Moses submitting and seeking and humbling himself and allowing God to humble him. This is how a walk with God should be.

Let us pray that God would work in our hearts and in our lives to achieve this level of relationship. Let us pray that we would humbly seek God in prayer, love, and

humility, so that we could develop this kind of intimacy with God. Let us pray for Him to draw us deeper in Him.

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

~ Exodus 33:7-11

Exodus 33:17–23

I love the dialogue between God and Moses at the end of Exodus 33. To sum it all up, after seeing God on the mountain while tending his flock, then living through the plagues and God’s mercy to the Israelites, then participating in God splitting the waters, then witnessing God giving the law, and everything in between, Moses came to God and asked God to show him His ways and then to show him His glory.

At a glance you could easily think, “Moses, open your eyes, dude! If you haven’t seen His glory and His ways, your head has been under a rock.” But what we should recognize here is something else. Moses saw. He witnessed, better than almost anyone, God’s glory, and he wanted more. He craved God. He was desperate for God. He needed more and more and more and more.

Let us pray for that kind of desperation for Him.

I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.

~ Exodus 33:19

Exodus 34:8–9

Moses has a cool prayer in Exodus 34. God had just revealed His back to Moses because His face is too holy for Moses to look upon. God was giving Moses the law and describing His glory that He was promising to shine forth on this people. And Moses prayed that God would not make him lead the people without Him. God was clearly showing His willingness to lead the people, yet Moses asked Him to be in their midst. When you look at this from Moses's perspective, though, this makes perfect sense.

Moses was so overjoyed at who he was discovering God to be that all he could think about was wanting more and more of God. As he was seeing the greatness and the goodness of God, he begged God to never leave them. Moses asked for Him to be in the midst of them. The word “midst” makes me think of middle but also surrounding and between each piece. I think of saturation. He asked for their sins and unrighteousness to be removed because he wanted no barriers between them and God. He asked that God would take them as His eternal possession.

The Global Church is meant to reflect this same relationship. We are meant to be individually filled and surrounded by the Spirit. We are meant to be bonded together and saturated as a whole with the Spirit. We are meant to be His, without reservation. Let us be praying

for ourselves, and for each other, and for the Global Church as a whole, that we would abandon the filth of this world and surrender wholly to intimacy with Him.

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

~ Exodus 34:6-7

Exodus 40:34–38

Exodus closes, in chapter 40, with the chief problem of all mankind. The Glory of the Lord entered the tabernacle in verse 34, and in verse 35, Moses was driven from the Lord's presence *because* the Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Our sin separates us from God. Moses had approached the tabernacle with several washings and cleanings, but he could not endure the Glory of the Lord.

Fast forward to Hebrews, and we see a High Priest who has passed through the heavens (4:14), is seated at the right hand of the Father (10:12), and has made us perfect in God's sight (10:14). By this great High Priest, we are invited to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (10:22) and to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (4:16).

Let us praise the Lord for this intimacy He has achieved with us. Let us grieve our sin that does drive us from the Lord's presence and rejoice in the perfect forgiveness that reconciles us to Him as if we had never sinned. Let us wail for the sins we continue to struggle with and weep that He loved us and sent His Son (1 John 4:10). Let us shout and glory and sing His praise that the world would echo His glory from east to west.

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!
Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all stars of light!
Praise Him, highest heavens,
And the waters that are above the heavens!
Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.
He has also established them forever and ever;
He has made a decree which will not pass away.

Praise the LORD from the earth,
Sea monsters and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
Mountains and all hills;
Fruit trees and all cedars;
Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and winged fowl;
Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
Both young men and virgins;
Old men and children.

*Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above earth and heaven.
And He has lifted up a horn for His people,
Praise for all His godly ones;
Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him.
Praise the LORD!*

~ Psalm 148

LEVITICUS

“This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble yourselves and not do any work, whether the native, or the stranger who resides among you; for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is to be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, so that you may humble yourselves; it is a permanent statute. So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement: he shall put on the linen garments, the holy garments, and make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

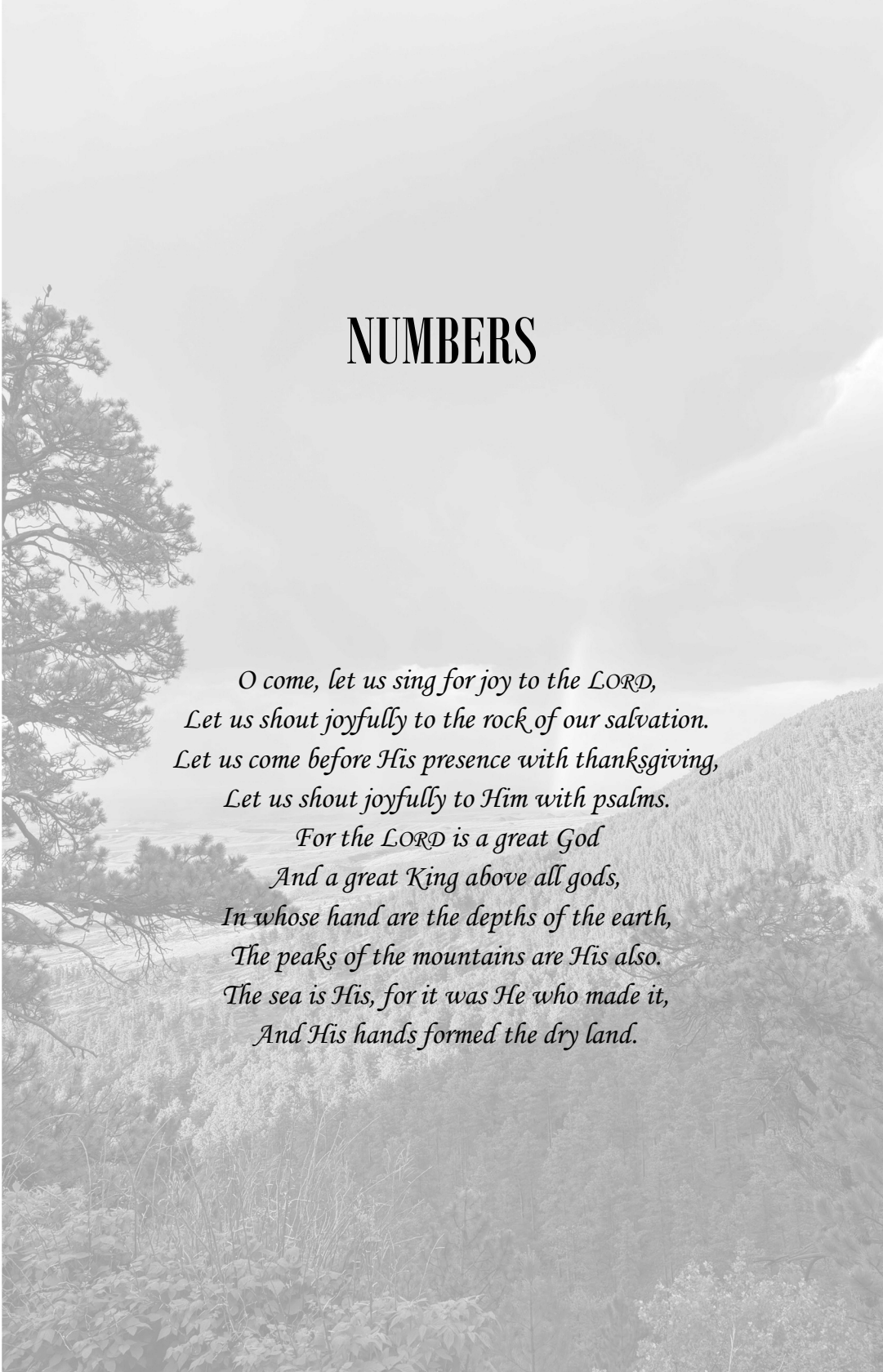
Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year.” And just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so he did.

~ Leviticus 16:29–34



Leviticus

I wanted to make note of the book of Leviticus. I wrote no prayer case studies in this book. None. It completely broke my heart to not address this incredible book. Leviticus is such an amazing and important book. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the book that I considered to be a prayer. Because my goal was to pray along with the Bible and to learn from the prayers of the Bible, I felt I needed to skip Leviticus because nothing seemed to fit the criteria. Some might disagree, and that is fine. I did *need* to make this note because I love Leviticus so much; I couldn't move past it without a mention.



NUMBERS

*O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

*For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
In whose hand are the depths of the earth,
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
The sea is His, for it was He who made it,
And His hands formed the dry land.*

*Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep
of His hand.
Today, if you would hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work,
For forty years I loathed that generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.
“Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”*

~ Psalm 95

Numbers 6:22–27

Numbers 6 reminds us of a very important concept in prayer that is introduced more clearly in Romans 8: we do not know how to pray as we ought. Starting in verse 22, God spoke to Moses and told him the prayer that Aaron was supposed to pray back to Him on behalf of the people. God gave him the words he was supposed to use. God wrote the script for Aaron. We know the prayer: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”¹

This is an important reminder for us of the passage in Romans 8. We are spiritually destitute in our own abilities. We cannot worship correctly. We cannot pray correctly. We cannot serve correctly. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. But the Spirit intercedes for us and God Himself does the work.

Let us pray in the Spirit. Let us humble our hearts and allow the Spirit to teach us how to pray and how to follow Him.

*“The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.”
So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then
will bless them.*

~ Numbers 6:24–27

Number 10:35–36

What a cool prayer (or two) we find at the end of Numbers 10. The people of Israel were following the cloud and the pillar of fire in the desert; it says that whenever God moved to lead the people Moses would pray, “Arise, O LORD and let Your enemies be scattered and let those who hate You flee before You” (verse 35). It says whenever God stopped somewhere for the people to rest, Moses would pray, “Return, O LORD, to myriad thousands of Israel” (verse 36).

Moses was desperate for God to go before him because he knew enemies were prowling and seeking their destruction. But much more, he knew the cost of walking away from God. Moses was desperate for God to dwell amongst the people in their rest because he knew the sin that arose in the people when they were idle.

Let us pray with this kind of desperation. Let us beseech the Lord to guide us in our lives, in our missions, in our ministries, in our work, in our rest, in our worship, in our repentance, in our sacrifice, and in our service. All these things are idolatry without Him in the midst. All these things are in vain without Him in it.

*Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said,
“Rise up, O LORD!
And let Your enemies be scattered,
And let those who hate You flee before You.”*

*When it came to rest, he said,
“Return, O LORD,
To the myriad thousands of Israel.”*
~ Numbers 10:35–36

Numbers 11:11–15

In Numbers 11, the people were complaining about manna that God rained down for them each and every day (except Sabbaths) because they wanted meat. Moses cried out to God in one of the best examples of what crying out to God looks like in Scripture. Moses poured out his frustrations, worries, and concerns to God. It is easy to read the prayer in verses 11 through 15 and hear a complaint, but given how God responded to Moses's complaints compared to how He responded to the complaints of the people, it would seem there is a very different heart here.

What is great here is that it seems Moses had gotten to the point of being overwhelmed, and he finally broke down. He went before God and just dumped out all of his fears, frustrations, concerns, and worries before Him. And the beautiful thing in this is that God responded by blessing Moses and providing for him.

Let us pray this openly with God. Let us take our frustrations, fears, worries, problems, conundrums, and kerfuffles to Him. Let us take the things too small for Him to care about (or so we think) and too big to dare ask (or so we feel) before a God who is patient, loving, gentle, and full of kindness. Let us draw near to Him and rejoice in His presence.

Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased.

~ Numbers 11:10

Numbers 12:9–15

Numbers 12 shows an awesome prayer from Moses. Moses's own brother and sister had opposed him and tried to take control of the people from him. In the process, they were bad-mouthing both him and his wife. God descended in a cloud and proclaimed Moses's authority over the people (given by God who has all authority) and gave Miriam leprosy. Moses responded with, "O God, please heal her—please!"²

I can tolerate some insults pretty well, but I struggle a bit with other insults. So, I can imagine that Moses was probably not pleased with what was being said, especially from his own siblings. It is awesome to see that, not only did Moses ask God to heal her, but the language seems to be that of begging. Moses clearly was not holding a grudge for this betrayal, and he was clearly passionate to see his sister not suffering. God didn't heal her outright, but He did make a way for her to be restored.

Let us pray like this. Let us pray for those who revile us. Let us pray for those who oppress us. Let us pray for those who take advantage of us. Let us pray for those who mistreat us. Matthew 5:44 calls us to pray for those who persecute us. Earlier in that same chapter, in verse 11, Jesus said that we are blessed when people insult us and persecute us and falsely say all kinds of evil against us. Looking at these passages together, the blessing we

receive in the mistreatment is that we get the opportunity to pray for them, as verse 44 commands. And we get to participate in loving others when love is not returned and to see God work in the life of a wicked person to draw them to righteousness.

Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not account this sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned. Oh, do not let her be like one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes from his mother's womb!" Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, heal her, I pray!" But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut up for seven days outside the camp, and afterward she may be received again." So Miriam was shut up outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was received again.

~ Numbers 12:11-15

Numbers 14:5–19

I was blown away in Numbers 14 by the model of prayer. I had just read this passage recently, and I have read it multiple times before that. But I had never seen the model for prayer in verse 5. The people were rebelling against God and getting pretty nasty about it. Their faith had crumbled. Their trust in God was done. At this point they saw God as being malicious to them rather than benevolent. In verse 5, you see that Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of everyone. You don't even see their prayers at this moment, just prostration. They saw sin kicking in the door, and rather than arguing or fighting or taking any action in themselves, they dropped down and humbled themselves before God. Ideally, the goal was to seek God in this moment and also turn the minds of the people back toward God so that they would prostrate themselves as well. When sin is kicking in our door or the doors around us, do we immediately seek to humble ourselves before God and lead others to do the same thing?

Verses 13–19 show us a prayer that Moses lifted up to God in this narrative. It seems like this wasn't his immediate prayer in this moment but that it was in response to God showing up and speaking to him. Moses's prayer was 100 percent God focused. There was no excuse making. There was no selfishness. There was no focus on the people. Moses begged God not to act in a

way he didn't think would fill the earth with God's glory. His prayer focused on God fulfilling a mission He had started, on the character of God as revealed by His own Word, and on a petition to God for Him to act according to His character that He had revealed.

Let us pray for this heart. I know we have prayed similar prayers as we have looked at Moses's prayers of intercession, but this is truly a prayer for our hearts to desire God's glory alone—not to desire God's glory more than other things but only His glory. We cannot pray this enough. Let us pray for God to remove the pride and selfishness in our hearts, minds, actions, and prayers. Let us pray that God would give us hearts that are confident in God's power but cowardly in themselves. Let us pray for hearts that lay face down in the dirt before our great God in worship and surrender.

But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, saying, "The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in mercy, forgiving wrongdoing and violation of His Law; but He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations." Please forgive the guilt of this people in accordance with the greatness of Your mercy, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

~ Numbers 14:17–19

Numbers 16

The next passage I found that shows prayer is in Numbers 16. You see Moses fell on his face in response to people sinning in verse 4, similar to the last prayer, so I didn't want to rehash that. The next prayer after that is in verse 15. The people were rebelling against Moses, accused him of all kinds of nasty things, and tried to take the priesthood from him by force. Moses responded with a strange prayer that might seem a bit too familiar to us. He prayed, "Do not respect their offering." He prayed, asking God to reject them.

The strangeness in the prayer is that Moses, the man of God, was praying basically: "Go get them God!" or "My dad can beat up your dad." What might be familiar is the wrath we might discern in reading this passage. We might pray for God to smite those who have upset us.

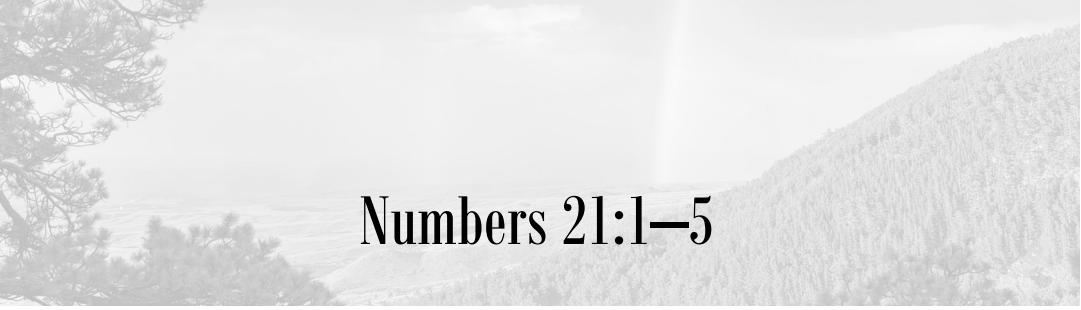
This prayer is bigger than that though. Korah and his group had rebelled against God and were trying to lead the people in sin. They were also making personal attacks on Moses. Previously in Numbers, we saw sin dealt with by Moses leading the congregation to stone the person, but here, where it was personal, we see Moses gave it to God and asked Him to work. Moses wasn't trying to let God off His chain to attack; he was giving his anger and his predicament to God and trusting in His righteousness and justice.

Let us pray with humble hearts. Let us lift up those we are angry with to God and ask Him to change their hearts and thwart their ways. Let us pray that God would intercede against those who blaspheme His name and His people, and that He would hinder their false ministry. Let us pray, asking God to take our burdens and shoulder them for us as He has promised to do.

Moses said, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD."

As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

~ Numbers 16:28-33



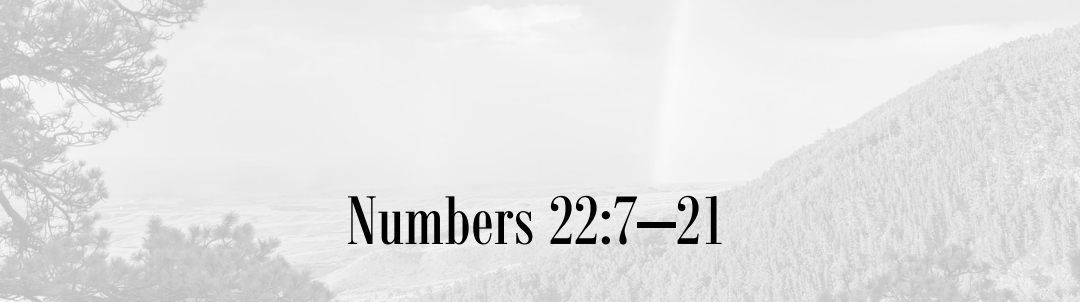
Numbers 21:1–5

Numbers 21 is a place where we need to remember that the narrative of the Bible shows what did happen, not what should have happened. Here we see an army came to attack Israel and won the first encounters. The people of Israel prayed to God and asked for His favor in the battle. They prayed differently than what we have seen in many of Moses's prayers leading up to this point. Moses prayed and asked God to act because of who God is. The people here made vows to God, asking Him to act because of what they would do for Him if He did. God didn't appear to hate that they did this because He didn't rebuke them, and He did grant them their request. But this manner of praying does seem to go against biblical wisdom. Ecclesiastes 5 cautions against not following through on vows; something that, when coupled with the stories of Saul and Jephthah, should give us pause. James 5 outright discourages the making of vows. Matthew 5:33–37 also seems to condemn the practice.

Ultimately, the prayer modeled in Numbers 21 clashes hardest with Matthew 7:7–11 where Jesus talked about God delighting in giving good gifts to His people. The idea of making vows like this to God seems to circumvent grace. God has paid the price. God has made the offering. God has done the work. Let us pray to God humbly, accepting and saturating in the gift of grace we have received from Him.

*The LORD heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the
Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities.*

~ Numbers 21:3



Numbers 22:7–21

Moving on in Numbers takes me to one of my favorite stories in the Old Testament (and some awesome trash talk in 2 Peter): Balaam and his talking donkey. Looking at the prayer, it seems like Balaam did things right. In the first visit, he sought God and obeyed God's refusal to let him go. In the second visit, he sought God and only went because God said he could. Looking at the full picture of Balaam, though, you find that while Balaam was seeking God and praying to Him, Balaam's heart was not surrendered, and the Bible narrative does not paint a good picture of him.

I think prayer is often frustrating for people because it feels one-sided and often disappointing when we come like Balaam. We tell God what we want and how we want Him to move. Here Balaam might have been asking God for His direction, but it seems his heart was set on what he wanted, not what God wanted.

Let us pray with hearts desiring God, not with hearts seeking to get from Him, nor with hearts that are set on anything other than His will. Let us seek to fellowship with God in prayer, to experience His presence, and then to watch carefully and expectantly to see Him move, because no prayer is unanswered—but many are not answered how we expect.

He received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

~ 2 Peter 2:16

Numbers 22:34–35

There is another great prayer in Numbers 22 in the Balaam story. God opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel blocking his path, and Balaam immediately "repented." I put the word "repent" in quotation marks because I think the rest of the Scriptures that speak about Balaam suggest that, perhaps, this wasn't true repentance. He acknowledged his sin and offered to turn back. The cool thing is that God knew Balaam's heart and his plan and used it anyway in order to bless the people and glorify His name in the sight of the Moabites.

I think this is an important prayer because of the offer that Balaam made. When his sin was revealed to him, he acknowledged that he was at fault and laid his plan down at God's feet. He offered to go no farther but sought God's will in fixing the problem. I think too often we get wrapped up in the "It's easier to ask forgiveness than ask permission" or "Shoot first and sort it out later" mentalities, but true repentance requires us to stop and prostrate ourselves before the Author and Judge of the universe. I don't think Balaam was sincere in this, but the great thing about his story is that God used his sinful heart and sinful intentions to display His truth.

Let us pray for humble hearts. Let us pray for hearts that are hungry to have our faults corrected and that are eager to repent in love and in truth. Let us pray for God's Spirit to align our spirit with His.

*I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing
in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to
you, I will turn back.*

~ Numbers 22:34

Numbers 23:4

Numbers 23 puts Balaam on Bamoth-baal (meaning the high place of Baal) seeking word from the Lord in regard to the people of Israel. His prayer at this point was, in my opinion, very unclear, but it offers a challenge to us in our prayer lives. Balaam offered sacrifices of seven bulls and seven rams on seven altars. I don't know the exchange rate between bulls and rams to US dollars or what inflation would have done to this in the last 3,000–4,000 years, but this seems like a significant offering. Balaam then prayed, merely telling God that he had offered these sacrifices.

As I mentioned, I am unclear on exactly why he prayed like this, but it brings to mind a couple of ways to pray. On the one hand, it is possible he was humbly bringing the sacrifice to God, sort of saying, “I have done these things joyously and faithfully out of devotion for You!” On the other hand, it is possible he was trying to show off or even demand favor, sort of saying, “Look at what I have done for You! Now You need to do what I want in response.” The latter seems significantly more likely.

Let us reflect on our hearts. How do we approach God? Are we coming to Him to flaunt our “obedience” or “sacrifice”? (I put those in quotations because when we put our obedience or sacrifice in the scales against that of our Christ, ours are found wanting.) Or is there truly a

humble passion to experience Him? Are we coming with agenda or bias? Or are we coming prostrate and empty, begging to be filled with Him? Are we praying like the Pharisee or the tax collector?³ Because we can recall Jesus didn't simply say that the tax collector was justified, but rather that he was the *one* who was justified (meaning the other wasn't). Where is your heart in prayer?

*How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not
denounced?*

~ Numbers 23:8

Numbers 27:1–11

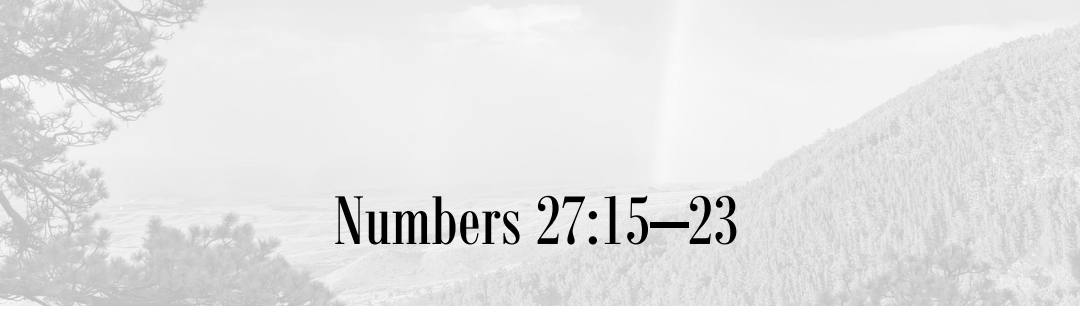
Numbers 27 has a story that seems a little strange to many people. The Israelites were getting ready to enter the promised land, and they knew the land would be distributed among the tribes when they did. A man named Zelophehad had five daughters and no sons, and he had died in the wilderness. This means that his household did not have any claim to property since the inheritance went to men. The daughters went to Moses and asked what to do. The story does not record the prayer of Moses in this situation, but it does say that “Moses brought their case before the LORD” (verse 5).

When faced with a difficult, confusing, or unique situation, Moses’s response was to go to God for direction. I wonder how often we have that response. How often do we stop in these situations and just seek God and His will, and humbly abandon our own notions in favor of His? Whether it is how to respond to the government telling us to behave certain ways, how to walk with brothers or sisters in war-torn regions like Ukraine or Afghanistan, or anything else, do we humble ourselves before our Lord and our God in these situations to walk according to His will?

Let us pray that He would transform our hearts by His Spirit to be a people zealous to pursue the God who is pursuing us.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father’s brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them.”

~ Numbers 27:6–7



Numbers 27:15–23

Numbers 27 also has another prayer from Moses. In this one, God was calling Moses to his last act of obedience before he died and gave him one last worldly blessing. As Moses prepared for his death, his prayer was that God would replace him with a strong leader. He wasn't saying they would be lost without him. He wasn't saying they needed someone better. He simply asked God to raise up a new leader because he knew the people and their hearts, and he was asking for what he knew they needed in order to follow God. God responded by raising up Joshua in this moment, but it is also a foreshadowing of the ultimate need for a shepherd for God's people that was fulfilled in Jesus.

What strikes me about this prayer is that Moses had been a very important and intimate part of the lives of the people. He had poured into them and loved them for years. But he also knew they were not his, and he served at the pleasure of his Lord. He came to the end of his ministry to this people and humbly stepped away. But he asked for God's blessing upon them as he transitioned out.

I would encourage you to sit in this passage a bit. Mull it over and let it impact you according to God's Spirit. And let your response be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led prayer.

May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.

~ Numbers 27:16–17

DEUTERONOMY

I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

~ Ezekiel 36:24–30

Deuteronomy 3:23–29

Deuteronomy 3 has a heartbreaking prayer. Starting in verse 23, Moses was recounting a prayer he offered to the Lord previously. His prayer was:

O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.¹

Moses was nearing his death, and his final desire in this world was to merely gaze upon the goodness that God has planned for His people. But Moses went on to say that because of his own sin, he was forbidden from entering the land. God was merciful and allowed him to see the land from the heights of a neighboring mountain but no more.

This is the nature of sin: If we choose to rebel against God and His ways, we are not even allowed to see the goodness He has planned for His people. We don't get to look at it, let alone partake in it. At our last breath, when our sin and the reality of God are often most clear, we will realize most clearly that which we have willfully surrendered for trifles and temporaries. But if we will turn to Him and ask His mercy and pardon, He is faithful and just to forgive us of all our sins and purify us of all

unrighteousness.

Let us reflect on this tragedy and undeserved grace
and respond in prayer.

*But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and
would not listen to me.*

~ Deuteronomy 3:26

Deuteronomy 5:22–27

Deuteronomy 5 recaps another prayer that, to me, isn't really intuitive. Moses told the story about God calling the people to come meet with Him. The people were afraid and basically said, "About that . . . we just saw His plagues and the whole Sea of Reeds thing . . . how about you (Moses) go up there, and we will wait here, so He doesn't kill us. And if you survive, then tell us what He said." My heart broke for the people upon reading this because they rejected an invitation for a face-to-face relationship with God and asked for an intermediary instead. To me, it seemed like they blew it.

Instead, God said they were right, and that He wished they were always like this. God praised their humility in knowing their sinfulness was infinitely offensive to Him and their fear of Him was right (as in righteous). God said the people were acting in a righteous way by asking for someone to go between Him and them so they did not bring sin into His presence.

Let us pray on our own hearts and actions in light of this passage. We know their hearts were in the right place because God said so. How do our hearts measure up? Let us reflect, ask for repentance and forgiveness, and praise Him for His glory and mercy.

Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives.

~ Deuteronomy 5:24

Deuteronomy 6:4–25

Deuteronomy 6 and the *Shema* are not really presented as a prayer, but the Israelites, and later the Jewish people, have prayed this passage as a prayer for thousands of years. Many pray this every day; some even pray it three times each day. The concept of the whole chapter seems to point to loving the Lord so much that it is annoying to those around us.

Love with all your heart, soul, and strength. Teach your kids about Him. Talk about Him when you sit down. Talk about Him when you walk. Talk about Him when you lie down. Talk about Him when you stand up. Write His words on your glasses. Write His words on your house. Remember Him. Fear Him. Serve Him.

And the chapter closes with (paraphrasing): “When your kids say, ‘DAD! WHY DON’T YOU EVER SHUT UP ABOUT GOD!?!?’ then tell them all about how awesome He is!”

I know I miss that mark and imagine you do too. Let’s pray for God to give us hearts like this, so that His ways would be walked in and His glory would be proclaimed.

The LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.

~ Deuteronomy 6:24–25

Deuteronomy 9:26–29

Deuteronomy 9 ends with another prayer that is actually a retelling of a prayer from earlier in the narrative. This style of prayer from Moses is highlighted over and over in the early books of the Old Testament. Rather than skipping over it because we have already prayed it in this passage, I felt like it was appropriate to revisit the prayer, because God's word forces us to revisit it so many more times if we proceed through the books of the Old Testament.

Once again, we see Moses as the intercessor between God and the nation of Israel. Moses approached God with the utmost humility, knowing that he was not worthy to stand before a Holy God in his own merit. He was driven by two motivators: a deep and overwhelming passion for his God and an overwhelming pity for this people. He made a prayer to God that was entirely selfless and focused on God's glory.

Let us pray that God would give us hearts that would be passionate for Him, compassionate to others, and humble in regard to ourselves.

*You rebelled against the command of the LORD your God;
you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. You have
been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you.*

~ Deuteronomy 9:23–24

CLOSING

As we come to the end of the *Torah*, I hope that you have been changed by it. I hope that you have seen God more clearly. I hope that you have seen yourself more clearly. I hope that you have prayed along with these passages and read the context in between the parts this book focuses on.

There were some judgments made about what to include and what not to include, so if there are parts or pieces that you feel I missed, I would ask your forgiveness and encourage you to pray those passages as well.

Now that you have finished praying through the *Torah*, go back and pray it again. And pray through other passages. Continue praying through the Old Testament or pray through the New Testament. Continue on in the *Praying with the Bible Series*, walking through the entire Bible

Ultimately, my goal in putting this together was that you might be blessed and that your prayer life might be enriched; that is my prayer as we come to a close.

*I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me;
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me
Afar and anear,
Alone or in a multitude.*

*Christ shield me today against wounding
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.*

*I arise today
Through the mighty strength
Of the Lord of creation.*

~ An Excerpt From Saint Patrick's Prayer¹

ENDNOTES

A Note from the Author

1. Parsons, John J. “Batishbachot - Offering Praise to God.” Batishbachot - Offering Praise to God, Hebrew4Christians Ministries, 2022, www.hebrew4christians.com/Blessings/Daily_Blessings/Praise/praise.html.

Introduction

1. Luther, Martin, et al. Luther’s Works, Volume 24. Concordia Publishing House, 1955.
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:17
3. Marsh, K. W. The startling prayer life of Søren Kierkegaard. Posted February 28, 2020. America Magazine. <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/02/28/startling-prayer-life-soren-kierkegaard>
4. Romans 8:26
5. Scriven, Joseph Medlicott. “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” Hymnary, hymnary.org/text/what_a_friend_we_have_in_jesus_all_our_s. Accessed 30 Mar. 2023.

Genesis

1. Matthew 26:39
2. Luke 10:38-42

Exodus

1. Exodus 3:4
2. Exodus 3:13 paraphrase
3. Exodus 15:24 paraphrase
4. Exodus 15:25 paraphrase
5. Hebrews 4:16 paraphrase
6. Exodus 24:7 paraphrase

Numbers

1. Numbers 6:24-27
2. Numbers 12:13 ESV
3. Luke 18:9-14

Deuteronomy

1. Deuteronomy 3:24–25

Closing

1. “St. Patrick’s Breastplate: The Prayer of Ireland’s Patron Saint.” IrishCentral.Com, 25 July 2023, www.irishcentral.com/roots/st-patricks-breastplate-prayer-irelands-patron-saint. Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

Prayer is one of those things. We know we should do it, and maybe we even want to. We see others do it, and maybe we do it ourselves. For some, it is a discipline or a habit, but for others, it is a struggle. But would any of us say we are great at it?

In this book, we will begin to walk through the Scriptures to learn the wisdom God has shown us about prayer. We are taking the examples given to us, reflecting on them, and becoming wiser in our own prayer lives. And what better place to start than the *Torah*!

I am inviting you into my exploration of the prayers in the Bible. My hope with this book is that we are able to see some beautiful prayers (and some cringe-worthy ones). I hope we are inspired and gain perspective. I hope we build habits. But most of all, I hope that, by studying the prayers of the early books of the Scriptures, we grow a passion for encountering the Living God.

Praying with the Torah presents prayer in a way unlike anything else. Rather than leading readers in reiterating scripted prayers, this book explores how the Bible presents prayer, in both positive and negative perspectives. If you're searching for a comprehensive look at the way the Bible presents how to pray—and if you want to learn from the earliest followers of God how the practice of prayer is intended to be used—then you'll treasure *Praying with the Torah* as an essential resource.

Praying with the Torah is the first installment of the *Praying with the Bible Series*, by R.A. Sweeney.

R.A. Sweeney writes, not as an expert teacher, but as a tour guide of the Scriptures. After getting to know Jesus in his mid-twenties, he became a Hebrew scholar and has taught Scripture and led Bible studies for many years. He strives to write in a way that helps others understand what the Bible is saying, rather than speaking for the Bible.

He has lived in Wyoming nearly his entire life and enjoys exploring the glory of God's masterpiece in the Wyoming outdoors.



Davek Le'lohim
Books