

02 – PRAYING IN FAITH

- ✓ None of the prayers we'll look at in this series are "denomination-specific". (None of these prayers have a disclaimer that says, "This prayer is for Baptists only". Or: "This one's for Pentecostals". No, Jesus gave these prayers to the *whole* Body of Christ! (Every prayer we'll look at is for the whole Body.)
- ✓ Different denominations might *apply* these prayers to different things, but the prayers themselves never change. (Let me give you a couple of examples. The first prayer we'll look at is the Prayer of Faith.)
 - a.) You can pick up any number of Pentecostal books that apply the Prayer of Faith to physical healing. (God *does* still heal today, and that's how they choose to apply the prayer. "I'm going to pray for my healing!" That's okay.)
 - b.) In his books, Billy Graham applies the prayer of faith to winning souls. (He says, "It takes FAITH to win souls!" Then he talks about praying in faith that people would come to Jesus. That's okay, too.)
 - c.) I've got *another* book by Elmer Towns (who used to run a Christian University.) He talked about trusting God for the finances to keep the University's programs running smoothly.
- ✓ In each case, the individuals were from different *denominations*, and they were praying for different *things*. But the prayer *itself* never changed. (You can read their books and see the exact same principles being used by all three.) The prayer doesn't change. Even when we apply it to different situations.

Another Example – Exercising Spiritual Authority

- ✓ A lot of Scriptures point to the fact that God has given us authority over the enemy (Luke 10:19, Mark 16:17). Now, I can understand how *Pentecostals* might gravitate toward that sort of thing. But can

a Baptist use spiritual authority? Absolutely!

- ✓ Once again, Billy Graham applies it to winning souls. He writes: "Every time I give an invitation, I am in an attitude of prayer. I feel emotionally, physically and spiritually drained. It becomes a spiritual battle of such proportions that sometimes I feel faint. There is an inward groaning and agonizing in prayer that I cannot possibly put into words." (Leadership Secrets – p. 292.)
- ✓ One biographer describes Graham bowing his head and "praying a prayer of authority, silently commanding any troublesome spiritual elements to be silent, somewhat as Jesus had commanded the evil spirits to be silent." (Billy Graham – His Life and Influence – p. 120.) That's spiritual authority being applied by a Baptist. These prayers are for ALL Christians!

Why Do I Bring This Up?

- ✓ Sometimes, we'll see these prayers being used in a way that offends us. (Maybe you saw someone trying to cast devils out of a Christian, and you don't think a Christian can *have* a demon.) The tendency, at that point, is to run from that kind of prayer altogether. But don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Just because someone *misuses* a prayer, doesn't mean the prayer itself is bad.
- ✓ If someone misuses a twenty-dollar bill – (if they spend it on illegal drugs) – that doesn't mean ALL twenty-dollar bills are bad. You don't run from twenty-dollar bills because you saw one being misused. You just make sure that when YOU get a twenty-dollar bill, you use it properly! The same is true with these prayers.
- ✓ If you've seen someone misuse a type of prayer. Don't run from that type of prayer. Go ahead and pray the prayer, just do it Biblically.

What *Does* The Bible Say About Christians & Demons?

- ✓ We might as well talk about it while we're here. *Can* a Christian have a demon? Not in his spirit! The Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian's

spirit, and a demon can't get in! All right, here's another question: Can a Christian have a demon **on the OUTSIDE**, that's tempting him or harassing him? Absolutely. The devil tempts and lies to all of us.

- ✓ Suppose you've been to the doctor, and you had some tests done. When you're back home, waiting for the results, the devil can bring all *kinds* of fearful thoughts to your mind. ("You've probably got cancer. Didn't you notice how concerned the doctor looked when he took the test? He *knows* you're dying! How's your family going to get along without you?")
- ✓ If you let him, the enemy will torment you with thoughts like that! But the good news is, you don't have to let him! You have every right as a Christian to stand up and say, "Shut up, in Jesus' name!" (That's using your authority in a biblical way.) The enemy can pressure a Christian's *mind*, and he can attack a Christian's *body*. But he can't get into a Christian's *spirit*. If the devil is tempting you, or harassing you, you have the right to run him off, in Jesus' name.

Prayer #1 – The Prayer of Faith

Mark 11:24 – "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

- ✓ Remember what we said last week? In each of these prayers, God has a part to play, and we have a part to play. (If we'll do our part, God will do His.)
- ✓ God's Part – Let's start with God's part, because there's only one point here. ("... and **you shall have them**".) That's God's part. His part is to answer the prayer. (He can handle that!)
- ✓ Our Part – As I said, with many of these prayers, "our part" consists of four things. Let's look at them one at a time. (It'll be easier to explain if we use an example. So, what are we going to pray about?)

OUR PRAYER: *That people will get saved and our church will grow.*

1. **Desire** – Mark 11:24 – "What things soever you **desire** ..." – It almost looks like God's making an open-ended promise here. "Whatever you desire – *anything in the whole world*." (Is that really what God is saying? No. We need to qualify that.)

- ✓ Obviously, God isn't saying we can ask for ANYTHING, even if it's illegal or immoral. (For example, if I'm single, I can't pray that your wife will leave *you* and marry *me*." That should be obvious!) **The thing I'm "desiring" needs to be in line with God's Word, God's Will and God's Nature.** So, how about my example? Does it line up with God's Word, Will and Nature? (Does God want people to be saved and go to church? Yes.)

2. **Pray (Ask)** – Mark 11:24 – "... *when you pray* ..."

- ✓ Notice the word "when". He's referring to a specific moment in time. "**WHEN** you pray ..." **In that moment** ... as you stand there praying ... He wants you to do something. What does He want you to do?

3. **Believe** – Mark 11:24 – "... *when you pray, believe* ..."

- ✓ He's very specific about what He wants us to believe. (We're going to skip over this one for now. We'll come back to it in a moment.) Let's look at the last thing we're told to do.

4. **Forgive** – v. 25 – "... *and when you stand praying, forgive*."

- ✓ In all of the verses on prayer, this is the only hindrance to prayer that Jesus ever mentioned. Unforgiveness makes receiving from God impossible. (Illustration – Faith is the "hand" that reaches out and receives from God. Unforgiveness ties that hand up.) If you want to receive from God, you've got to forgive.
- ✓ Let me remind you of some of the things we learned about forgiveness in our "Sermon on the Mount" series: (a) Forgiveness is not saying that what they did to you is okay. It's *not* okay, and it will

never *be* okay. (b) Forgiveness is not a feeling. Forgiveness doesn't mean you no longer feel pain. You've just decided to let it go.

Mark 11:25 (Amp) – “Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him [drop the issue, let it go].”

- ✓ So, (#1) desire something that's in line with the Word. Does God want people to get saved? Yes. (So, “check”!) (#2) Pray (ask God for it). We'll do that in a moment. (So, “almost check”!) (#4) Forgive those that have hurt you. (That family that left the church said some hurtful things on the way out. I'm going to have to forgive that.) Now let's go back to the one we skipped over ... (#3) “Believe”.

What Are We Supposed to Believe?

- ✓ “Believe that Jesus is the Son of God”? No. (That's a good thing to believe, but it's not what He told us to believe *here*.)
- ✓ What if I believe that God answers prayer? (Again, that's a good thing to believe. But that's *still* not what He told me to believe.) In this verse, Jesus told us to *believe that we receive*.
- ✓ The word “receive” means to “take” or “get”. So, here's what I'm supposed to believe. I'm to believe that God holds it out to me, and that I reach out and “take” it from God's hand.
- ✓ Now, if God holds it out, and I “take” it, who has it, me or God? I do! *If I already have it, is there any point in continuing to ask for it?* No! So, from this moment on, I stop *asking* and I start *thanking* God. (Because I believe I've got it! If I can't see it yet, it's on the way.)
- ✓ So, if I'm praying that the church will grow, what am I supposed to believe? I believe that God *heard* me and *answered* my prayer. So, I start to expect that when I invite people to church, they'll say yes. (Maybe not *everyone* will say yes, but *some people* will.) Since I believe I received, then I start to plan about how we'll handle the people when they get here. (Kids, parking, etc.) All the while I'm thanking God that people will be saved and blessed in our church.