

**Prayer as a Solution to Modern Man's Problems:
A Biblical Reappraisal
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Absract

Prayer is one of the most misunderstood arts of the human experience, yet it is meant to be one of the most exciting aspects of a life of faith. It is not just an activity, a ritual, or an obligation. It is communion and communication that touches God's heart. It is the expression of man's relationship with God and participation in his purposes. Certain people have lost their faith altogether, because of unanswered prayer. Some have turned to philosophy, metaphysics, or cults to find answers to life's questions and problems. Others have turned to horoscopes, psychic hotlines, and witchcraft. The spiritual and emotional pain of unanswered prayer can be deep and devastating.

Introduction

In the Bible, prayer is a worship that includes all the attitudes of the human spirit in its approach to God. The Christian worships God when he adores, confesses, praises, and supplicates him in prayer. This highest activity of which the human spirit is capable may also be thought of as communion with God, so long as due emphasis is laid upon divine initiative. A man prays because God has already touched his spirit (Douglas 1980). Prayer in the Bible is not a 'natural response' (Jn. 4: 24). 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; As a result, the Lord does not 'hear' every prayer (Is. 1: 15, 29: 13). The biblical doctrine of prayer emphasizes the character of God, the necessity of a man's covenant relation with him, and his entering fully into all the privileges and obligations of that relation with God.

Prayer is also the act of attempting to communicate with a deity or spirit. Purposes for this may include worshipping, requesting guidance and assistance, confessing sins, as an act of reparation or to express one's thoughts and emotions. The words of the prayer may take the form of intercession, a hymn, incantation or a spontaneous utterance in the person's praying words. Secularly, the term can also be used as an alternative to "hope". Praying can be done in public, as a group, or in private.

In the patriarchal period, prayer is calling upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 4: 26, 12: 8, 21: 33). The sacred name is used in invocation or appeal. In this discourse on prayer, we shall examine what we mean by prayer in popular parlance and in the Christian sense. In the popular parlance, prayer means to ask, to want something, to require, wish, desire or request for something for oneself (Uke 1994). Prayer is not an acquired art; it is an instinct. Usually, in times when life is too much for us, when we are strained beyond breaking point, when we are tempted beyond the power to resist, when our minds are troubled and our hearts are broken, then we pray! In this sense, prayer is

unquestionably the natural human reaction to situations, which have gotten beyond human control. It needs no argument therefore to prove that prayer is the universal human reaction to any crisis or desperate situation.

Etymologically, pray entered Middle English as *preyen*, *prayen* and *preien* around 1290, to denote "to ask earnestly". The next recorded use in 1300 is simply "to pray". The word came from English form of Old French *preier*, to "request". In modern French *prier*, "to pray", the stem vowel is leveled under that of the stem-stressed forms, *il prie*, etc. The origin of the word before this time is less certain.

Compare the Italian *pregare*, "to ask" or more rarely "pray for something" and Spanish *preguntar*, "ask". One possibility is the Late Latin *precare* (as seen in Priscian), classical Latin *precari* "to entreat, pray" from Latin *precari*, from *precor*, *prec-*, *prex* "request, entreaty, prayer". *Precor* was used by Virgil, Livy, Cicero, and Ovid in the accusative. From classical times, it was used in both religious and secular senses.

The Latin *orare* "to speak" later took over the role of *precari* to mean "pray". Most closely related in the Portuguese *perguntar*, "to ask" and by extension "ask for". Pray is akin to Old English *gefr* (AE) *ge* "hearsay, report", *fricgan*, *frignan*, *frinan* to ask, inquire, Old High German *fraga* question, *fragen* "to ask" (in modern German, "pray" is *beten*, "question" *frage*), Old Norse *fretta* "question", *fregna* "to inquire, find out", Gothic *fraihman* "to find out by inquiry".

Among these methodologies are a variety of approaches to understanding prayer namely: The belief that the finite can actually communicate with the infinite; that prayer is to inculcate certain attitudes in the one who prays, rather than to influence the recipient; to train a person to focus on the recipient through philosophy and intellectual contemplation; to enable a person to gain a direct experience of the recipient; to affect the very fabric of reality as we perceive it; a catalyst for change in one's self and or one's circumstance, or likewise those of third party beneficiaries; and the belief that the infinite is interested in communicating with the finite; or the belief that the recipient desires and appreciates prayer.

Prayer, as an act of worship, has many different forms. It may be done privately and individually, or it may be done corporately in the presence of fellow believers. Prayer can be incorporated into a daily "thought life", in which one is in constant communication with a god. Some outward acts that sometimes accompany prayer are: anointing with oil; ringing a bell; burning incense or paper; lighting a candle or candles; making the sign of the cross. One less noticeable act related to prayer is fasting.

A variety of body postures may be assumed, often with specific meaning (mainly respect or adoration) associated with them: standing;

sitting; kneeling; prostrate on the floor; eyes opened; eyes closed; hands folded or clasped; hands upraised; holding hands with others; a laying on of hands and others. Prayers may be recited from memory, read from a book of prayers, or composed spontaneously as they are prayed. They may be said, chanted, or sung. They may be with musical accompaniment or not. There may be a time of outward silence while prayers are offered mentally. Often, there are prayers to fit specific occasions, such as the blessing of a meal, the birth or death of a loved one, other significant events in the life of a believer, or days of the year that have special religious significance.

In this context, we tend to connect prayer with the extraordinary, the abnormal, the hour and the moment when life goes disastrously wrong and when there is nothing that we or any one else on earth can do about it. One of the best illustrations of this kind of situation is captured in the story of Jonah whose ship was caught up in a disastrous storm (Jonah 1: 1-5). Another illustration is that of the disciples of Jesus caught up in a storm while Jesus was sleeping in the boat (Mk. 4: 35-41). Prayer presupposes the existence of God who created and controls all natural processes and all human destinies. In the biblical sense, this God is a personal God whose love, care, concern and admiration for human beings is constant, steadfast, unchanging and eternal. William Barclay opines that prayer is keeping our friendship with God in constant repair (Barclay 1962). The question is what sort of prayers should be regarded as authentic prayers and which prayers should be regarded as fake prayers? This is the vision and mission of this paper to unravel biblically.

The Old Testament Approach

In the common Bible of the Abrahamic religions, various forms of prayer appear, the most common forms being petition, thanksgiving and worship. The largest book in the Bible is the Book of Psalms, 150 religious songs which are also prayers. Other well-known Biblical prayers include the Song of Moses (Exodus 15: 1-28), the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2: 1-8), and the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55). In Judaism, the most important Jewish prayers are the Shema Yisrael ("Hear O Israel") and the Amidah ("the standing prayer").

Adherents of Kabbalah (esoteric Jewish Mysticism) base their prayers on those found in the siddur, the traditional Jewish prayer text. For these Kabbalists, every prayer, every word of every prayer, and indeed, even every letter of every word of every prayer, has a precise meaning and a precise effect. In Kabbalah and related mystical belief systems, adherents claim intimate knowledge about the way in which the divine relates to us and the physical universe in which we live. To people with this view, prayers can literally affect the mystical forces of the universe and repair the fabric of creation.

There are about eighty-five original prayers in the Old Testament. In addition there are about sixty whole Psalms and fourteen parts of Psalms which may be called prayers. Prayer in this perspective is connected with sacrifice (Gn. 13: 4, 26: 25, 27: 20-22). This offering of prayer in a context of sacrifice suggests a union of man's will with God's will, an abandonment and submission of the self to God. This is especially so in Jacob's conjoining prayer with a vow to the Lord. The vow, itself a prayer, promises service and faithfulness if the blessing sought is granted (Gen, 28: 20 ff).

In the pre-exilic period, one of the main emphases in prayer is intercession (Gen. 18: 22ff). Intercession was also prominent in the prayers of Moses (Ex. 32: 11-13, 31f, 33: 12-16, 34:9; Nu. 11: 11-15, 14: 13-19, 21: 7; Dt. 9: 18-21, 10: 10). Deuteronomy 33 is also largely a prayer of intercession, as are also the prayers of Aaron (Nu. 6: 22-27), Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 5-13, 12: 19, 23), Solomon (1 Kings 8: 22-53) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 19: 14-19). These people prayed as prophets, priests, and kings, but the Lord always remained free to execute his will, hence we hear of unsuccessful intercession (Gen. 18: 17ff; Ex. 32: 30-35).

It is surprising that among all the legal enactments of the Pentateuch, there is nothing about prayer apart from Deuteronomy 26: 1-15 (Douglas 1980). We are, however, right assuming that sacrifice would often be offered with prayer (Ps. 45: 14), and where it was not it might be reproved. On the other hand, the almost total absence of prayer in those parts of the Pentateuch where sacrifice is regulated suggests that sacrifice without prayer was fairly common.

Prayer was indispensable in the ministry of the prophets. The very reception of the revelatory Word from God involved the prophet in a prayerful relation with Yahweh. The prophetic vision came to Daniel while he was at prayer (Dan. 9: 20ff). In the Psalms, there is a blending of pattern and spontaneity in prayer alongside the more formal "sanctuary" prayers (Ps. 24: 7-10, 100, 90). There are personal prayers for pardon (Ps. 51), communion (Ps. 63), protection (Ps. 62), healing (Ps. 6), vindication (Ps. 119), and prayers that are full of praise (Ps. 103).

During the Exile the important factor in religion for the Jews was the emergence of the synagogue. The Jerusalem Temple was in ruins, and altar rites and sacrifices could not be performed in unclean Babylon. The centre of the religious community was the synagogue characterized by religious obligations such as circumcision, fasting, Sabbath observance and prayer. At the post-exilic period, Ezra and Nehemiah while insisting upon cult and law, ritual and sacrifice, yet emphasized also the spiritual factor in devotion (Ezra 7: 27, 8: 22f, Neh. 2: 4, 4: 4, 9). Their prayers are also instructive (Ezr. 9: 6-15; Neh. 1: 5-11, 9: 5-38 cf Dan. 9: 4-19). As regards posture in prayer

there were no fixed rules (Ps. 28: 2; 1 Sam. 1: 26; 1 Kg. 8: 54; Ezr. 9: 5; 1 Kg. 18: 42; La. 3: 41; Dan. 9: 3). Prayer being what it is, it would be manifestly impossible to systematize it completely.

In the Old Testament, there are certainly patterns for prayer, but no binding regulations governing either its contents or its ritual. Mechanical prayer, prayer hemmed in by coercive prescriptions, did not come until towards the close of the intertestamental period, as the gospels make it clear. The Old Testament has numerous examples of God blessing his people in response to their prayers (Gen. 18: 16-33; Ex. 3: 7-10; Num. 21: 4-9; 1 Kg. 18: 20-39; Neh. 1: 1-11). It is deeply instructive to note how prominent and regular an activity prayer was in the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 3: 21; 5: 16; 9: 28f; Heb. 5: 7) and how closely the apostles, both corporately and individually, followed his example (Acts 1: 14; 2: 42; 4: 4-6, 23-31; Eph. 1: 16; Phm. 4). Jesus, however, did not leave it simply to example; he both instructed his disciples to be prayerful and taught them how to go about it (Mt. 5: 44; 6: 5-15; Lk. 11: 1-3; 18: 1-8).

The New Testament Approach

The New Testament made a clear defined area on prayer, but the fountainhead from which all its instruction in prayer flows in Christ's own doctrine and practice. Douglas (1980: 1021) avers that in the gospels, Jesus' doctrine is set out principally in his parables. In the parable of the friend who borrowed three loaves at midnight (Lk. 11: 5-8), the Lord inculcates importunity in prayer; and the ground on which the confidence in importunate prayer is built is the Father's generosity (Mt. 7: 7-11). The parable of the unjust judge (Lk. 18: 1-8) calls for tenacity in prayer, which includes persistence as well as continuity.

God's delays in answering prayer are due not to indifference but to love that desires to develop and deepen faith which is finally vindicated. In the parable of the publican and the Pharisee (Lk. 18: 10-14), Christ insists on humility and penitence in prayer, and warns against a sense of self-superiority. Self-humiliation in prayer means acceptance with God, self-exaltation in prayer hides God's face. Christ calls for charity in prayer in the parable of the unjust servant (Mt. 18: 21-35). It is prayer offered by a forgiving spirit that God answers. Simplicity in prayer is taught in Mathew 6: 5f, 23: 14; Mark 12: 38-40; Luke 20: 47. Prayer must be purged of all pretence.

The Acts of the Apostles is an excellent link between the Gospels and the Epistles, because in Acts the apostolic church puts into effect our Lord's teaching on prayer. The church was born in the atmosphere of prayer (1: 4). In answer to prayer the Spirit was poured out upon her (1: 4, 2: 4). Prayer continued to be the church's native air (Acts 2: 42; 6: 4, 6). In times of crisis the church resorts to prayer (Acts 4: 23ff; 12: 5, 12). Throughout the Acts the church leaders emerge as men of prayer (Acts 9: 40, 10: 9, 16: 25, 28: 8) who urge the Christians to

pray with them (Acts 20: 28, 36, 21: 5). In Pauline epistles, James and 1 John stressed the efficacy in prayer (Rm. 12: 12; Eph. 6: 13-17; Heb. 4: 14-16; James 1: 5-8, 5: 13-18; 1 Jn. 3: 21f, 5: 14-16).

Contemporary Approach to Prayer

Christian prayers are very varied. They can be completely spontaneous, or read entirely from a text, like the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Probably the most common and universal prayer among Christians is the Lord's Prayer, which according to the gospel accounts is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Some Christians (e.g. Catholics, Orthodox) will also ask the righteous in heaven and "in Christ", such as Virgin Mary or other saints to intercede by praying on their behalf (intercession of saints).

It is customary among Protestants to end prayers with; "In Jesus name, Amen" or "In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen". The most commonly used closure in Christianity is simply "Amen" (from a Hebrew adverb used as a statement of affirmation or agreement, usually translated as: "So be it"). There is also the form of prayer called hesychast which is a repetitious type of prayer for the purpose of meditation. In the Western or Latin Rite of Catholic Church, probably the most common is the Rosary; in the Eastern Church (the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church and Orthodox Church), the Jesus Prayer.

Another type of prayer is "prayer healing" broadly defined as faith healing. It is the attempt to use religious or spiritual means such as prayer to prevent illness, cure disease, or improve health. Those who attempt to heal by prayer, mental practices, spiritual insights, or other techniques say they can summon divine or supernatural intervention on behalf of the ill. Faith healing may be said to afford gradual relief from pain or sickness or to bring about a sudden "miracle cure", and it may be used in place of, or in tandem with, conventional medical techniques for alleviating or curing diseases. Faith healing has been criticized on the grounds that those who use it may delay seeking potentially curative conventional medical care. This is particularly problematic when parents used faith healing techniques on children.

Erickson (1998: 17) postulates that Friedrich Heiler is often cited in Christian circles for his systematic *Typology of Prayer*, which lists six types of prayer such as primitive, ritual, Greek cultural, philosophical, mystical and prophetic. Some anthropologists, such as Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Sir James George Frazer, believed that the earliest intelligent modern humans practiced something that we would recognize today as prayer (Zaleski; Zaleski 2006: 24-25). Peschke (1999: 140) posits that all prayer life is, in a decisive way, formed and inspired by the religious community to which a person belongs. Christians for their part receive this formation and guidance from the community of the church. Accordingly, three conditions are demanded

for prayer namely attention, humility and trust. A Christian must apply himself constantly to prayer, self-denial, active brotherly service and the exercise of all the virtues.

Religious traditions of mankind agree with Christianity in the conviction that the contemplative life precedes the active life, because it enables men to pursue a knowledge and devotion that sets free. Man cannot truly love God without knowing him, for nothing is loved unless it is known. Just as history shows that religion and worship are nowhere lacking entirely, so it also proves the fact that men of all nations and of all times have prayed and do pray (Peschke 1999). The basic law for Christians is the example and word of Christ. His example is a call to constant prayer. Jesus taught his disciples the need "always to pray and not to lose heart" (Lk. 18: 1). He exhorts them to pray especially in times of temptation (Mt. 26: 40). Similar exhortations also occur in the letters of the apostles (1 Thess. 5: 17f; Eph. 6: 18; Col. 4: 2).

The need to pray is in a special way an exigency of man's love for God. Prayer is also required by man's need for the two other theological virtues, faith and hope, because prayer is the primary means of keeping these virtues alive and nurturing them. Man cannot worship without praying to God. The motive of prayer can be adoration, praise and thanksgiving, petition, intercession and propitiation (Peschke 1999). The first three types of prayer primarily centre on the glorification of God while petition remains most suited for man in his earthly existence. Some have termed this the social approach to prayer. In this view, a person directly enters into God's rest, and asks for their needs to be fulfilled. God listens to the prayer, and may or may not choose to answer in the way one asks of him. This is the primary approach to prayer found in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, most of the Church writings, and in rabbinic literature such as the Talmud. These types of prayer are not totally independent forms of worship.

Interior prayer or mental prayer is the encounter of the heart with God and the dwelling of the soul with him. Merely interior prayer prescind from any external word, although it is in some manner associated with mental words and images. If it is to be authentic, it must be sustained by interior prayer or at least by a desire to awaken interior prayer.

Prayer helps to sharpen the sense of the spiritual significance of beings and events. It has a direct effect upon the moral goodness of the worshipper. A living faith largely depends on what is called a life of prayer. If a person does not open up to God in prayer, he will not be able to develop a strong and vigorous faith. Prayer in the time of trouble brings comfort, help, hope and blessings (Bounds 1984). God's entire plan is to take hold of fallen man and to seek to change him

and make him holy. God's work is to make holy men out of unholy men. This is the very end of Christ coming into the world. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil". Prayer helps one to make eternal investment (Duewel 1986). It is an intercession for the salvation of others, for the building of Christ's church, for revival among God's people, and for the evangelization of the World all partake of the quality of the eternal. Prayer is the only expression of love which cannot be stopped or rejected. It helps one to touch the world positively. It is a key to world evangelism. It is the master strategy that God gives for the defeat and rout of Satan.

Basis of Biblical Prayer for the Modern Man's Solution of Problems

In the New Testament, prayers are said not to a grudging and unwilling God, but to a Father who has given proof of his generosity in that, "He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? (Rm. 8: 31cf 1 John 5: 14). The basis that the New Testament gives for the certainty that prayers are heard is that prayer is stated as a basic principle of the kingdom of God (Mt. 7: 7-11, 6: 8; Jn. 15: 16, 16: 23; Col. 1: 9-12). Implicit in these asking and receiving passages is a further certainty which runs through the Bible, that is for sure that God is a living and loving God who hears and sees and who has a heart full of compassion (2 Chron. 16: 9). The Lukan passage interprets this specifically as asking for the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11: 13cf Mt. 7: 11). In other passages, true prayer is described as asking in faith (Mt. 21: 22, James 1: 5). "Therefore... whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it and you will" (Mk. 11: 24cf 1 John 5: 15). The corresponding passage in the Johannine Writing expands this idea of asking in faith as "his word remaining in us" (Jn. 15: 7).

By way of a summary, it could be said that the Christian God is not the Greek type of God who moves others but is never moved. God worshipped by Christians is the creator of heaven and earth who responds to the needs and aspiration of his creatures. Prayer is the only power on earth that can overcome the laws of nature – that is cause miracles to happen (Kuhlman 1990).

There are certain laws relating to prayer. The first law of prayer is that we must demonstrate transparent honesty, sincerity and integrity in prayer. The second law of prayer is that we must be very definite in prayer. It is not enough to ask for God's forgiveness simply because we are wretched and miserable sinners. We must specifically name the gifts for which we are giving thanks. The other inevitable law of prayer is that God will not do for us that which we can do for ourselves. The fact is that prayer should be seen as the co-operation of our effort with the grace of God. When a person is sick and goes to the medical doctor for treatment, the doctor will prescribe some

medicine, some diet, and some course of treatment. And unless the patient co-operates with the doctor by carrying out his instructions, he might as well never have consulted him. How can a farmer who refused to cultivate his farm expect to harvest any crops? How can an athlete who refuses to engage in serious athletic training hope to win a gold medal in an athletic competition?

It is when we make our greatest effort that God sends his greatest answer. This is not to say that it is by our might or by our power. Prayer again does not normally promise or achieve release from some situations; rather it brings power and endurance to meet and to overcome that situation. A classic example of power in weakness is the Cross of Christ. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed God to release him from the agony of the Cross. He was not released from the Cross, rather he was given power to endure the Cross (Mt. 26: 39; Lk. 22: 42). Paul observed that a thorn was given him in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass him. Three times he besought the Lord about this, that it should leave him. But the response was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12: 7-9).

Throughout the Bible, we have the imperative command to pray. Jesus himself gave a parable to the end that people ought always to pray and not to faint (Lk. 18: 1). To Paul, prayer is a person's vital breath. He believes that a person will perish when he ceases to pray. Hence he exhorts Christians to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5: 17cf Phil. 4: 6; 1 Tim. 2: 1). Christians therefore, ought to pray because it is so strictly commanded by God in the Bible. We often pray for the fruit of womb, for success, prosperity, life, health, marriage, good governance, robust economic condition, peace, safe journey and the like, and God does answer.

Samuel said to the people of Israel, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12: 23). The unbeliever could think that the only way to get things is by working hard for it or by planning, scheming or by accident. He could argue that for a farmer to grow a crop, he has to till the ground, sow his seed and weed the grass. This is true. But if a Christian is God's co-worker, then prayer will imply the co-operation of, say a farmer, with God. The farmer has to play his part in tilling the ground, sowing the seed and so forth. But in spite of God's provision of the rains, the sunshine, yet the Christian prays for the safety of the crops from being attacked by pests or bad weather. In this way he is asking for God's co-operation to prosper his efforts.

Prayer does not mean extortion as some "fake pastors and their cohorts" are practicing. These "counterfeited pastors, prophets, prophetesses" and their agents do often demand for certain vows or money for exorcism, and prayer for the fruit of the womb in which

many women have fallen victims, for transport fare to travel to the purported venue for the "claimed prayer". They demand also money from some politicians who need prayer in order to win elections, from businessmen in order for them to have robust economy, and from some civil servants for them to get promotion and for other similar dubious activities. Their prayers are economic-oriented in nature, which are not targeted towards ameliorating the teething situation of the victims. Such prayers should be regarded as fake (cf. 1 Kings 18: 25-29, a fake prayer denoting dramatic demonstration of Baal's impotence). Prayer, for whatever purpose, is free, because the power to heal, exorcise, perform miracles, prayer for the fruit of the womb and so on is given freely to the apostles as the Bible explicitly avers, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay" (Mt. 10: 8; Rm. 3: 24; Eph. 1: 6 cf Acts 8: 18-20 where Simon the sorcerer thought that is something money could purchase).

James in his general Epistle argued thus:

What cause wars and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions... You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage wars. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions (James 4: 1-3).

You ask wrongly when you depend only on asking without playing your own part as a co-labourer with God (2 Cor. 6: 1).

Conclusion

In the light of the preceding discourse, it needs to be stated that successful prayer is for those who love the Lord and are surrendered to do his will (cf Ps. 65: 2). Though it is true that God sometimes answers the vilest sinner (Lk. 18: 9-14), yet throughout the scripture, it is made clear that God delights to answer the prayers of those who seek him and love him with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. In Joshua 1: 8, the Lord spoke to Joshua saying:

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

If Joshua had turned his heart away from hearing the law, he would not have prospered, he would not have succeeded, and the blessing of God would have been withheld from him. The writer of the book of Proverbs said, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28: 9).

The effectiveness of the weapon of prayer can no longer be doubted in this nation where it was used in removing the worst tyrant that

Nigeria ever had. Even in Britain, Queen Victoria at the height of her glory once said, "I do not fear the armies of Scotland, but I fear the prayer of John Knox" (Uka 1999: 79). The importance of prayer is further underscored by Stalin's reaction to Hitler's attack in 1940. What happened was that when the Communists took over power in Russia in 1917, one of the very first things they did was to abolish the existence of the church right through the length and breadth of their vast domain. Church money and property were confiscated and defiant church leaders were either imprisoned, killed or sent to concentration camps. In 1940, Hitler attacked Russia and brought her to the verge of total destruction. Stalin, the dictator and a leading architect of Russian Communism, had to turn to the surviving, but discarded church leaders to re-enter their former places of worship and pray for Russia's survival (Uka 1999: 79-80).

Most Christians usually want to approach God in five different ways namely adoration which denotes the praise of God; confession of sin and request for pardon; thanksgiving for God's general and special acts of goodness; intercession which connotes coming before God in the interests of another person, to ask God's help for that person, or for other groups; and lastly, petition, that is, asking God for help or blessings for ourselves, and for communities of which we are a part (Krass 1982: 124). Jesus set a petition for coming of the end right at the heart of his pattern prayer: "Your kingdom come". He, quite apart from his inner continuous communion with the Father, frequently engage in audible prayer (Lk. 3: 21), and sometimes continued in prayer through a whole night (Lk. 6: 12). Milne (1993: 283) opines that if we believe in the Lord's coming and the end of the age, then we should pray for it.

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