

## Midweek Message

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV)*

As I mentioned this past Sunday, we, as God’s beloved people, should have an active and vibrant prayer life. However, as I’ve often said, prayer isn’t always something that I fully understand and yet Scripture certainly tells us that we’re to pray. The Apostle Paul, in the Scripture above, tells us that we’re to “*pray without ceasing*” which conveys the idea of always being ready to pray at any moment. He’s not telling us that we should be constantly mumbling words directed toward heaven but that we have the awareness and the activity of prayer as being our first resource and not our last resort. At any moment in any day we have full access to the throne of grace because we have a high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who intercedes on our behalf. Now, there are many facets of prayer and certainly no sermon or even a sermon series will ever fully explain all of what the Bible teaches regarding prayer. However, between what we’ll be discussing on Sunday mornings and these Midweek Messages, I’d like to share with you some insights from Scripture regarding what God tells us regarding our prayer lives. This week I’d like to share with you the acronym ACTS as a format for prayer which some of you may already use as you approach the throne of grace.

**First**, there’s **Adoration**. In other words, we recognize who God is and we praise Him for who He is and all He’s done and is doing in our lives and in this world. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He began with these words, “*Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name’*” (Matthew 6:9 ESV). The Apostle Paul, in one of his prayers, closes with these words, “*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen*” Ephesians 3:20, 21 ESV). King David, when praying in the assembly of Israel began his prayer in this way,

*“Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: ‘Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.’”*  
(1 Chronicles 29:10-12 ESV)

We’ll talk more about this aspect of prayer in this Sunday’s message. For now we must understand that we’re coming before the Lord God Almighty when we bow before Him in prayer.

A **second** aspect of prayer that might be helpful is that of **Confession**. This is simply a time in which we recognize our sinfulness and unworthiness – that although God has given us the great privilege of prayer, we have no right to come before God in and of ourselves. Going back to King David’s prayer, he actually revealed this truth when he said,

*“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.”* (1 Chronicles 29:14-15 ESV).

When Jesus wanted to make this point, He told a parable in which He said,

*“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:10-14 ESV).*

They say that confession is good for the soul and I believe that true confession is certainly good for all of us. We must always be aware that even the privilege of prayer is an aspect of God’s grace given to us and that when we do come to Him in prayer, we should confess our sins. The comfort we can draw from such sincere confession is that *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 ESV).*

**Third**, we should always come with an attitude of **Thanksgiving**. The Apostle Paul makes that very clear in the above Scripture when he says, *“give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 ESV).* Now, I know it’s not always easy to be thankful when we’re in the midst of difficult situations, when life isn’t going as we might desire, when troubles seem to pile up against us. And yet, as the Apostle Paul tells us, being thankful in the midst of our struggles is God’s will for us. In times such as these, I’m often reminded of this wonderful Scripture: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6 ESV).* Did you notice how we’re to be thankful regardless of what we might be facing? All our prayers should include some form of gratitude as we remember our unworthiness as well as our hope that’s firmly secured through the redemption that’s ours in Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus often included statements of thanksgiving in His prayers (Mt 11:25; 26:27; Jn 6:11; 11:41). Listen, as we realize that all we are and all we have is only by grace, then gratitude is much easier to express.

**Finally**, one last aspect of ACTS is that of **Supplication**. This is where we bring before God the desires of our hearts, in keeping with His will as revealed in the Scriptures. The Apostle Peter tells us, *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6,7 ESV).* Don’t you find it utterly amazing that the God of creation, the God who is far beyond our comprehension, the God who is perfectly pure and without any semblance of sin, would desire to hear from us about all the issues in life and the things we would like to see accomplished? I’ve never understood why God, who already knows all things – even what we’re going to say before we say it – desires for us to ask and yet, that’s exactly what He does. The Apostle John gives us this assurance when he writes, *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (1 John 5:14,15 ESV).* Now, this isn’t a blank check in which God is going to give us whatever we happen to desire. It’s all based upon the will of God for us, and those around us, as we seek to do His will as revealed in Scripture. God is always free to say no, yes, or not yet as He continues to bring about His plan and purpose for our lives.

Prayer is the lifeline of the believer. In prayer we commune and communicate with the Lord who will always hear us. ACTS is a tool that when followed can help us in our times of prayer. We need to pray, and we need to pray ceaselessly as we continue through this journey we call life.

***Pastor Mark***