

PRAYER & WORSHIP

ALSOM: THE 311

I. INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

Q: WHAT IS PRAYER?

- In the broadest definition - prayer is communicating with God.
- This can be done:
 - Audibly - as God hears our words.
 - Silently - as God knows our thoughts.
- Communication is two-way, so prayer can include both:
 - *Speaking to God*
 - *Listening to God speak.*

Humans are designed to ask existential questions:

1. Where did I come from?
 2. Why am I here?
 3. Is there something or someone who made all that I see, and can I connect with that entity?
- *These questions are not unique to Christianity.*
 - *Every major world religion tries to answer those questions.*

Anthropologists, Philosophers, Theologians alike often refer to the asking of these questions as the:

- **God-shaped vacuum** - the void found in people's lives that only God can fill.
- **The Hebrew word YADA refers to** knowing God in an intimate way.
- Every major world religion offers a way or means of connecting with its specific understanding of GOD.
- Every religion has some type or form of praying.

Christian Prayer is unique.

Christian Prayer is communication with the One True God.

The God who created the cosmos – carved mountains – his power is awe inspiring, but also lets us know – we are not his peer, not his equal.

- We must approach him with reverence.
- Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

And at the same time – the Psalmist says: “You made the sun, moon, & stars,

what is man that you are mindful of him?"

The N.T. tells us to approach the throne of grace with confidence/boldness.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. – Hebrews 4:16

- The Greek word carries with it the nuance of confidence in the face of intimidating circumstances.
- It is the same Greek word Paul used when he wrote the Ephesian church:

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, - Ephesians 6:19

- Paul was talking about his circumstances – being a Roman Prisoner and going before the vaunted system of Roman Justice, possibly even Caesar himself. Paul was saying, “My circumstances are intimidating, I am confident, but PLEASE pray I remain so.”

Likewise, When we approach God’s Throne, we can be confident of His Goodness, but still in awe reverence by His Glory. Someone that powerful is intimidating. The Jesus who is the friend sticking closer than a brother, is the Jesus whose countenance in Revelation is like blazing fire, Jesus who will return to judge the living and the dead. Christians learn to hold these truths in harmony as we call upon our LORD and pray on all occasions.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY GUIDE:

1. To unpack key truths from your curriculum about what prayer is and what it does.
2. To walk through Biblical scenes of prayer.
3. To think theologically about prayer.
4. To think about prayer in the life of the individual believer and the local church.
5. To consider the model and teaching of Jesus concerning prayer.

II. A NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICUM OF PRAYER – Stay in Scene

In the days after Jesus’ resurrection, we see stories of how his followers prayed. They were following the teaching & model of their Shepherd.

- Jesus used the analogy of the sheep/shepherd relationship when speaking of how people hear his voice. Sheep **SHOULD** always recognize their shepherd's voice.

Biblical Scene #1

Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

- **Grounding Truth**: Consistent corporate prayer has always been the **PRACTICE** of Christians. We often hear his voice best, in the company of those practiced at hearing his voice, seeking to hear him. Jesus said where 2-3 are gathered, I am in their midst.

Consider church concerts or musicals which you have attended, perhaps at Christmas or Easter. A Team Member who refuses to practice well with others, can ruin a performance – sing off key, embarrass themselves.

- *The teaching and model which Jesus provided was that his followers are to gather consistently in corporate prayer.*
 - More than a habit, Jesus early followers knew it was vital to spiritual life, it was how they stayed connected to their Risen Savior AND to one another. Private Personal Prayer, yes, but there is safety when you pray with seasoned saints. They can help you sift thru what you think you might be hearing, they can mentor you in prayer.
 - **NOTE**: “constantly joining together” occurred before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Q: Why consistent corporate prayer?

- Prayer was never merely a solo effort, it was a dynamic group discipline where leaders and laity (men, women, children), gathered to pray.
- The phrase “together constantly” indicates personal and corporate diligence to practice prayer as a group.
- Corporate prayer brings corporate purity and unity, protection from praying wrong ideas, and it also reinforces the unique nature of the covenant community. Praying together is like a galvanizing force, a furnace which bonds people together. Jesus knew his followers needed this, AND SO DO WE. **Consistent corporate prayer has always been the PRACTICE of Christians.**
- **We can develop mountain moving by stepping out in commitment and obedience.**

- Unceasing prayer involves a daily ongoing conversation with God.

Biblical Scene #2

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

- Grounding Truth: Prayer has always been the PRIORITY of Christians.
 - *More than a casual commitment, prayer was a cornerstone of all they did. The church set aside time to do it.*

Have you ever seen a great athlete who went to practice, but they were not truly DEVOTED to practice, not DEVOTED to the game, their heart was not in it. You can practice prayer, but still grow cold, we must fan the flame of our DEVOTION, that is what makes practice a priority OF OUR HEARTS. We will DEVOTE TIME to what is truly a priority. How much time do we or our churches devote to prayer over and above other things less important?

- **“Devoted themselves”**
 - “Devoted” in the Greek carries ideas of: persevering, dedicating. And prayer was one of the 4 cornerstones to which the church was devoted.
 - Prayer was a
 - Personal Priority
 - Corporate Priority
 - Done with glad and sincere hearts.
- **According to the IST< spiritual growth is not a matter of trying but a matter of training.**
- **One of the seven benefits that persistence in prayer brings to Christians is gratitude.**
- Prayer has always been the PRIORITY of Christians. Jesus made it so.

Biblical Scene #3

Acts 3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer — at three in the afternoon.

- Grounding Truth: Prayer has always been the PATTERN of God's People.

- The disciples were raised within the context of Judaism.
- Judaism practice a pattern - practicing specific hours of prayer, so that prayer would always remain a priority. That was how they wove prayer into the fabric of daily live, asking God to enter into every moment for His Glory and their good.
- The historic church has always kept similar hours of prayer because Jesus' disciples, to whom he entrusted the formation of the church, kept a personal and corporate pattern of prayer within their normal day to day living. And the historic church prayed specific prayers – psalms, portions of scripture, such as the Lord's Prayer, SO THAT – their prayers remained biblical, God centered.

Spiritual Exercise

- **The early church devoted itself to:**

- Teaching of the Apostles – bible study under qualified & tested teachers.
- Fellowship – the familial nature of the covenant community (we are God's family) and the comradery that cultivates.
- Breaking of Bread – sharing of common meals and the sharing of communion (The Lord's Supper).
- Prayer – Personal, Corporate – Practice, Priority, Pattern.

- **Consider everything our modern churches do, spend money on, etc., which fall outside these 4 core practices.**
- **Compare the time, energy, and money we spend on things which are peripheral, to the resources we spend on what should be primary.**
- **Why do you think this is so?**

- **New Testament prayer differs from that of the Old Testament by being both community and individually oriented.**
- **The time of the Judges is marked by lack of prayer.**
- **Leaders who fail to pray risk falling into the trap of self-reliance.**

Old Testament Example

Consider the stories of the Judges:

- Over time the judges degenerate in faithfulness to God, in personal character, and in their covenant duties.
 - Consider the life of Samson the Judge.
 - Prayer does not characterize his life.

- *Samson's pursuits are compromised.*
- *Samson's self-reliance costs him everything. He relies upon what he considers HIS Talent, HIS strength, and forgets that - NO - it is God who has given him any good thing he has.*
 - *Samson ends up blind, imprisoned, time passes and he is brought ought to be mocked by the enemies of God at a big party.*
 - *Only then does Samson pray that God give him the strength needed to defeat those who mock God.*
- *Models of ministry built on persona, talent, etc., will always fall, let this be a warning to the people of God.*

Jesus taught, modeled, and charged his disciples that prayer was to be:

- i. **A Practice – they joined together constantly**
- ii. **A Priority – they devoted themselves**
- iii. **A Pattern. – they set aside time**
- iv. **Period.**

Martin Luther said that he could not get much done during his day if he had not first prayed several hours. John Wesley said that when he was busy he prayed, when he was very busy – he spent even more time in prayer. It is time for the American church to return to the place of personal and corporate prayer. The God of the cosmos is calling us.

III. THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER

PRAYER IS RELATIONAL BECAUSE PRAYER IS TRINITARIAN

- **This means that Christian prayer is to Father, through the Son, by the presence and power of the indwelling Spirit.**
- Furthermore, Jesus prayers are a glimpse into the relationship found in the Trinity.
- Our prayers as Christians are our participation in the life of the Trinity.

Prayer is:

1. To the Father

- a. *Mark 14:36* **And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”**

b. Romans 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

2. Through the Son

a. 1 Timothy 2:5... *there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

3. By the Holy Spirit

a. Luke 10:21-22 *" he [Jesus] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for as such was your gracious will."*

b. Galatians 4:6 *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

Every prayer a Christian prays, is grounded in a relationship that existed before time began. Christian prayer enters into the intimacy that exists within the Trinity.

- Our prayers get swept up into this Holy Community. The weakest words, and the loudest cries, the shouts of thanksgiving, and the grace of meals.
- **Maintaining eternal perspective in prayer causes us to see life from God's point of view.**
- **In Revelation 8, the Apostle John described a scene in which heaven was silent or interrupted by the prayers of men.**
- Our prayers move into the realm of the relationship that God the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit share. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit carries and empowers our prayers. The Bible teaches us that Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father and is making intercession for us.

IV. A CULTURE OF PRAYER – God's Design

Q: HOW DID JESUS LEARN TO PRAY? Remember, Jesus became fully human and had to learn, mature, and grow as all human children do.

1. Godly Parents & Family

- a. *Joseph & Mary would have taught Jesus how to pray.*
 - b. *Jesus would have observed the extended family in prayer – at meals, festivals, daily prayers, temple, etc.*
- 2. God's Covenant Community**
- a. *Jesus would have heard other godly men and women of his community praying in various venues and scenes of life such as at synagogue, at festivals, on holy days, in general, etc.*
- 3. God's Scripture**
- a. *Jesus would learn how holy people of the past prayed by hearing and reading their stories.*
 - b. *Jesus would have heard the commandments of Moses on prayer, the Shema, etc.*
 - c. *Jesus would have learned to pray by reading the Psalms.*
- 4. God's Leaders**
- a. *Jesus would have heard God's leaders praying, leading people in prayer, etc. Leaders rightly shaped by the scriptures.*
- 5. God the Holy Spirit**
- a. *Within the above context, the Holy Spirit would begin leading Jesus in prayer.*

Spiritual Exercise

- **Look back over the list above.**
- **Consider how many people do or do not learn to pray from each of these five sources.**
- **Each source is important for balance.**
 - God gives us each of these to guide us, to serve as guardrails, to help us learn how to pray to the One True God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
 - *Note: How much more important are the relationships of the local church if someone does not have godly parents to teach them?*
- **POINT: The contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic Church should invest itself more in the pattern which God's Word provides.**
 - *We must be taught to pray by mature seasoned believers both leaders and laity, in our home and in our churches.*
 - *Our prayers must be informed by scripture, filtered by scripture, so that we are not praying in unbiblical fashion.*
 - *We must not use "following the lead of the Spirit" as an excuse for unbiblical prayers, because the Holy Spirit will never lead us to pray anything contrary to God's Word.*

- All prayer is a response to what God has done, is doing, or will do.
 - Prayer deepens our relationship with God by helping us learn the mind and the will of God.
 - The term “petition” refers to bringing our requests before God.
- Pray Simply
 - **Matthew 6:6-7** *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*
 - If you pray with the eloquence of William Shakespeare, fine, God has given you a gift of language, use it for His Glory.
 - If you are not great with words, fine, you have other gifts.
 - If a child comes to you for a hug, or with open hands and an empty stomach...you don't judge, you respond. Likewise, God responds.
 - **The discipline of prayer requires that people practice personal communion and dialogue with God regularly.**
- Pray Lengthy - Set Aside Time - Longevity
 - **Luke 6:12** *In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.*
 - It will be much easier to pray faithfully when we eliminate some of the noise. Set aside a time to cut off the smartphone, TV, Internet, even cut off the worship music.
 - We need to learn to hear our Shepherd's Voice, learn to listen in silence. Set aside times to do so.
 - **To hear God's voice, a Christian must first realize the importance of seeking God's voice.**
- Pray Scripture
 - The Jews prayed the Shema of Deut. 6:4-5 daily and Jesus as a devout Jew would have done the same which explains why he could quote it freely from memory in Mark 12:29-30 – “Love the Lord.”
 - The Lord's Prayer is the specific way Jesus taught us to pray. Psalms are prayers & songs. It's fine to find Psalms you really ID with, write it down, take it with you & pray it by reading it. But remember, even the grittiest, roughest Psalms, always end in Praise. Pray & Praise faithfully.

- **We can learn to recognize God's voice by studying God's Word and spending time in His Presence.**
- **Pray Humbly**
 - **Luke 18:8-14** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "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."
 - **Jesus' story that compared the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector illustrates God's responsiveness to humility.**

Creating a Christlike Culture of Prayer means we:

1. Pray Simply
2. Pray Lengthy
3. Pray Scripture
4. Pray Humbly

V. **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**

**For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory,
Amen!**

Q: Do we pray the Lord's Prayer on a regular basis? Why not?

Q: Do we believe that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit?

Q: Do we believe these words were spoken by Jesus the Son of God, and recorded by Matthew under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer teaching the Son of God gave and the Holy Spirit made sure we had preserved in scripture for all of time.

Consider the following truths:

- As Pentecostals we can be resistant to structure in prayer, guidance in prayer.
- The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles to record the Lord's Prayer as scripture for all time and all believers.
- We must learn to pray as Jesus teaches us. If we do not we are not praying well.

Q: Do we believe that Jesus spoke with the authority of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and that the Gospel writers wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

If so, we have been given strong, rich, beautiful architecture of prayer by Jesus himself.

When we pray the Lord's prayer we are participating in 7 things by the power of the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.

1. Adoration
2. Worship
3. Provision
4. Confession
5. Intercession
6. Protection
7. Benediction

1. Adoration - "Our Father in heaven"

*a. **Romans 8:15** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

- How does your relationship with your own father effect how you see God?

- What does it mean to you to be able to talk to God as a loving father?
- In what ways does your prayer life reflect your trust in God as a father who is in control?
- Do you feel like you can address God in prayer with the affection of dad?
- **God wants us to be motivated to engage in the spiritual disciplines by a sincere desire to grow in our intimate relationship with Him.**

2. Worship – “hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.”

- In prayer, do you generally take the time to worship God?
- How often do you pray for God's will instead of your own?
- Are you ok with accepting God's will over your own?
- What does that look like?
- When have you stopped praying because you didn't like the answer God would give?
- **If our prayer life is to be an appropriate response to God, we must maintain a right view of God.**

3. Provision – “Give us this day our daily bread,”

- Do you pray for God's provision?
- Do you believe God cares about such things?
- Whose needs do you need to pray provision for besides your own?
- **Stepping out in faith affects our perception of God by causing us to appreciate His greatness.**
- **Prayer replenishes our soul by cultivating the vital connection to the bread of life and living water of Jesus.**

4. Confession – “and forgive us our debts,”

- How is your life affected by “spiritual debt”?
- Do you mourn your sin against God and others or mourn the consequences to yourself?
- What can we do in our church community to foster confession and repentance? Who do you need to confess your sin against right now?

- **The first step toward spiritual renewal is assessing the condition of our souls.**

5. **Intercession** – “as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

- Who do you need to forgive?
- What does that forgiveness look like practically?
- Unforgiveness does not hurt the person with who you are angry with, it only poisons you. Pray for those who persecute you.
- **Maintaining healthy personal relationships and corporate unity are two prerequisites within our relational lives that are necessary for effectiveness in prayer.**

6. **Protection** - “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

- Do we pray for Christ to guard us our life, guard our doctrine, rid our lives of ungodly influences?
- Do we take practical steps to cut ungodly influences out of our lives?
- How does this prayer reflect our desire to be close to Jesus?
- When have you prayed before you sin? What was the effect?
- **If we believe that one’s intensity of desire for something is definite assurance of God’s will, then we are in error because that belief does not reflect God’s character.**
- **We can know that God is speaking to us if godly counsel confirms the message.**

7. **Benediction** – “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen!”

- **Benediction**, is the utterance or bestowing of a blessing. It is taken from the Latin meaning, “To speak well.” It is a formal end to a prayer or service.
- **Prayer reminds us that we are not the ultimate leaders; Jesus is.**

Whether we realize it or not, God has designed this prayer to lead us towards:

- Adoration
- Worship

- God's Provision
- Confession
- Intercession
- Protection
- Benediction

Like the early Christians, the Lord's prayer needs to be a practice, priority, and pattern.

If Jesus gave his disciples a prayer pattern, then they were following this faithfully, even in the Upper Room when the Spirit came. When the Spirit came, God's Law was written on the hearts of those gathered.

IF WE HAVE BEEN PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER, WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY. And it always puts us into position to receive what GOD has.

Jesus gives us this prayer:

- 1. To align our prayers with God's Will.**
- 2. To teach us to THINK about what we are praying.**
- 3. To teach us WHO we are and WHO God is.**
- 4. To put words in our mouths when we can't muster any of our own.**
- 5. To pray with the Mind of Christ.**

Prayer is Theological, Prayer Relational, PRAYER is Transformational, it changes us. For us as individuals, and for us as institutions – churches who tell the world who Jesus is.

CS Lewis said. "I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. ... It doesn't change God. It changes me."

Every idea or opinion - you or I have ever had, is not as good ... as God's. God sees the end from the beginning,, he is the alpha and omega. WE do not pray to change him, in praying we give Him the chance to change us.

VI. STRANGE FIRE – PRAYERS DISAPPROVED BY GOD

In Leviticus, two of Aaron's sons came into the tabernacle, and offered what the bible calls "strange fire." The Hebrew for strange carries the idea of "profane, foreign, unauthorized."

In closing we would warn you against several misconceptions and misapplied verses regarding prayer: Namely, we are speaking about what is commonly called “Word of Faith” “Positive Confession” “Name it Claim it” doctrines and practices.

Each student needs to understand, that when we pray in ways which scripture does not give us authority to pray – it is foreign to God’s purposes – and profane to His Name.

Firstly, know that the “Word of Faith (WOF)” “Positive Confession” movements are rejected by 100% of Assemblies of God and our scholars.

- Not everyone you see with a “Dr” or “professor” in front of their name has genuine bible training from an accredited source. This is certainly true of many ministers you might see on late night “Christian” tv.
- The Assemblies of God is a Pentecostal denomination – we believe in the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit - and every single one of our best bible scholars as rejected the “Word of Faith” “Positive Confession” heresy.
- Unfortunately, at the grassroots – or local church level – these teachings from the wider Pentecostal charismatic movement can creep in at times.
- Hear us clearly, this is dangerous, it is damaging, it disillusion God’s Pastors and God’s People.
- There are even good ministers, who graduated from our A/G schools, who unintentionally pray the false doctrines propagated by the false teachers from the WOF movement.
- *It does not matter if we do not “FEEL” that we have prayed inappropriately, if scripture says we have then we have, period, end of discussion. We should take the correction and move forward.*

Word of Faith and Positive Confession adherents often pray:

“We” - “*call things that are not as though they were*”

The WOF followers pray this, and believe we can speak God’s Word over our finances, our bodies, our automobiles, etc., and see miraculous results to our benefit. All we truly need to see any result is a “confession,” enough personal faith, and God will transform the physical realm into an environment of blessing. They teach that we can “speak those things that are not as though they are.”

- Yet, in scripture, that power is reserved for God alone.
- It was pagan cults who believed their priests had powers, could speak special words, and manipulate the gods.
- **THAT IS NOT BIBLE CHRISTIANITY!**
- **IT IS NOT PENTECOSTALISM!**

- These words they often pray are taken from the book of Romans. The idea permeates all of their prayers, yet it is important to focus on this verse as they see it foundational to all they do.
- **“calls things that are not as though they were”** - is a small, isolated portion of Romans 4:17, and yet it is one of their foundational and favorite verses.
- From your Hermeneutics course, you have learned that it is simply unbiblical, unhealthy, and un scholarly to:
 - Isolate small portions of scripture from their surrounding context.
 - Build entire doctrines from small isolated portions of scripture, without taking into context the passage, book, author, entire counsel of the Bible, etc.

Q: Is Romans 4:17 about our prayer lives? Of what kind of power is it speaking?

Romans 4:17 is speaking of God’s Covenant with Abraham, Abraham’s unique place in God’s Redemptive Story as a father of faith, and about God’s power – not ours. Open your Bible for yourself and see the GOD inspired context!

Rom. 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Firstly, the Apostle Paul is simply speaking about Salvation by Grace Alone thru Faith Alone. Paul is reminding everyone – “Jewish ethnicity did not really get us anywhere, keeping all the little details of the law did not save anyone. We are saved by God’s Grace thru Faith in what Jesus the sinless Son of God did for us on the cross. Abraham gives us the greatest example of faith, and so is called our “father” in faith. Paul goes on ...

¹⁷ As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

- ***Paul is saying that Abraham is a father in faith, and all those who now believe are following in Abraham’s footsteps.***
- ***Next, Paul goes on to describe NOT Abraham, NOT Abraham’s prayers, NOT any type of prayer power Abraham wielded, NO!***
- ***Paul goes on to describe God:***
 - ***the GOD who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were;***

- i. It is GOD ALONE who gives life.
- ii. It is GOD ALONE who has power to give life to what is dead.
- iii. It is GOD ALONE who by His powerful word can either bring things into being or banish them from being. (Genesis 1-2)

When people pray “we call things that are not as though they were”: they are lighting a strange fire ... unbiblical worship & prayer.

1. They are actually putting themselves in the place of God Almighty, speaking as if they have His power.
2. They are praying in a way which they are not AUTHORIZED to pray, therefore it is FOREIGN to God’s purposes, and so pagan in its manner that it is PROFANE.
3. They are unintentionally praying in a very idolatrous and pagan manner.

Today we often hear people who are praying “**declare**” or “**decree**” what they want to come to pass as if they have mystical power in their words to make it happen. They “**call it done in Jesus’ Name**” and think that it MUST now happen because their declaration will call it into existence.

NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE do we ever see anyone using these words or phrases when praying. **NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE** do we see God giving any humans the power and authority to speak things into existence.

This kind of praying and confessing and belief in “faith as a force” and the “power to speak into existence” is found **NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE** and **NOWHERE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH** until the Word of Faith movement began to teach this in the 1940’s, 1950’s, and beyond.

We know - for a fact, with a demonstrable chronological paper trail - that these beliefs and practices came directly from the metaphysical cults, the mind-science cults of New England. **This is an explicitly occultic, new age, pagan penetration of the Pentecostal / charismatic movement.**

Compare this with the humility and grace Jesus gifts to us by teaching us The Lord’s Prayer. God deliver us from the pride, greed, arrogance, and downright paganism of believing we can speak things into existence. That belief has NEVER been a part of the Judeo-Christian faith.

Again, scholars have traced it directly to cults of the early 20th century who while trying to portray themselves as Christian ... were actually afflicted with heresy.

These and the other unique doctrines of the Word of Faith / Hyper-faith movement have been unanimously rejected by good Bible Scholars across every denomination. Most of those who subscribe to these unbiblical beliefs have always been independent, non-denominational – because they did not want any accountability, any legitimate Bible training – they did not want anyone to tell them – “That is wrong and it is going to hurt God’s Church.”

Be warned and beware.

Instead, when we pray as Jesus taught us, we are allowing our shepherd to keep on guiding us, tending us, growing us, leading us to life, leading us to maturity...for our good, His glory, and the blessing of the world.