

What We Believe Affects Our Prayers 1 Timothy 6:5-6

Introduction:

1. Last week we learned from 1 Timothy that there was a popular false doctrine of “*gain is godliness*” being taught in Paul’s day. In other words, the more money and material possession you have, the godlier you are. 1 Timothy 6:5
2. This same philosophy is being taught today. The goal is to get God to bless you, which equates to material, tangible blessings.
 - False teachers teach that it is God’s will for His children to be healthy and wealthy. He is waiting in heaven to bless you—“If you pray this prayer and do this...”
3. In 1 Chronicles 4:10, it records the prayer of a man in Israel by the name of Jabez. He prayed, “*Oh that thou would bless me indeed.*” A religious teacher wrote an entire book on this little-known man in the Bible and from this one phrase he taught that:
 - The plea for God to bless us should be the centerpiece of our prayer life.
 - God wants us to be selfish in our prayers.
 - When we seek God’s blessing, our lives will become marked by miracles.
4. This prayer in 1 Chronicles is just one guy’s spin on this idea that “*gain is godliness.*”
 - There is a popular pastor and author that teaches the exact same thing. He talks about people that are living unnecessarily under the “curse of poverty” while **he** lives in a multimillion dollar mansion. He teaches that God wants you to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous, and God is pleased when we develop a prosperous mindset.
5. What you believe will affect how you pray. If you will believe that “*gain is godliness,*” and it is a chief goal of Christianity and of God’s will, then your prayer life will be all about, “God bless me.”

Is the prayer for God’s blessing common in the Bible?

1. For example, Christians are told in one popular book, “...to make it a life-long commitment to ask God every day to bless you—and while He is at it, bless you a lot.”

- The author says, “If you didn’t ask Him for a blessing yesterday, you didn’t get all you were supposed to have.”
2. There are hundreds of prayers offered up by saints in the Bible. It is interesting that this is the only one in which an individual specifically asks for God’s blessing on himself.
 3. The phrase “bless me” is found only six other times in the whole Bible.
 - Four of those occasions are found in the shameful account of Jacob’s robbing Esau of his blessing.
 - The fifth time it was by King Pharaoh asking Moses to bless him at the Exodus.
 - A sixth time is when Jacob wrestled with the angel (Jacob was a deceiver and schemer at this time, and we don’t even know if Jacob knew who this was).
 4. If you study out the 500 times the words “*bless*” or “*blessed*” or “*blessing*” are used, here is what you find:
 - People blessing or praising God. Psalm 16:7
 - People pronouncing blessings on other people. Ruth 2:4
 - People receiving a promised blessing from God that meet certain conditions. Deuteronomy 30:16
 5. On one occasion God is asked to bless the nation of Israel, and once David asked God to bless “*his house*” forever, a reference to the covenant God had already made with David.
 6. Here are two important facts to consider for us living in the church age.
 - **First**, the Bible teaches us that we have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Ephesians 1:3
 - **Second**, there is no request in the church age epistles for God to bless us.
 7. Therefore, every reference to God blessing church age saints is a reference to spiritual blessings, not material blessings.
 8. What is the point we need to understand? While many times God promised to bless Israel, it was usually contingent upon their obedience to God’s law; however, we do not see a precedent in the Bible of saints pleading day after day for God to bless them.

What is the real danger of “*gain is godliness*”?

1. This doctrine of “*gain is godliness*,” which leads to a preoccupation with God blessing **me**, has some very serious inherent dangers.
2. It leads to what I call “sanctified selfishness” or “sanctified covetousness.”

3. It is the idea that God is somehow pleased when we pray selfishly, and when we possess a materialistic mindset. Think about how this appeals to people today (here in America). “I can pray selfishly, be materialistic, receive blessings from God, and be spiritual, all at the same time.” What a deal!
4. Sorry to disappoint you, but the Bible teaches just the opposite. James 4:3-4 says, that believers can pray and ask God for things selfishly, only to consume them based on the lust that is in our heart; we ask “*amiss*”—bad, evil.
 - God says that selfish prayer is evil. Prayer can become a covetous exercise to simply get what **we** want. That is not what prayer is all about. God is not our heavenly Santa Clause, or heavenly bellhop, or genie in a bottle.
5. Believers are told that if you pray just the right prayer, your life will be marked by miracles, especially if you send your prayer request in to the person on TV with your best gift.
6. The Bible never **promises** a miracle because we pray. Miracles are rare occurrences in the Bible that happen for a specific purpose. But do you know what God does promise?
7. He promises that when we take everything to Him in prayer, He will give us a peace which passes all understanding, which will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7
8. While the apostle Paul never prayed, “Lord, bless me,” he did pray for boldness to witness for Christ, for spiritual understanding, for a greater love, for the salvation of souls, for other believer’s faith to grow, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, for a holy walk, etc.

In Conclusion:

1. What you believe affects how you pray. If you believe the lie that was being promoted (vs. 5) that “*gain is godliness,*” then your prayers will be all about “God bless me.” Again, why do people, even believers, have this mindset? Because they think the Bible teaches that “*gain is godliness.*”
2. But if I believe (vs. 6) that “*godliness with contentment is great gain,*” then this will definitely change the way I pray. I will pray that God will show me from His Word, how can live a more godly life, learning to have Spirit-filled contentment.