

Entering the Throne Room

From Unworthiness to Confidence

By Barbara Ho



I have claimed this verse in prayer more times than I can begin to count: “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). God answers the prayers of the righteous. I’m reminded of this every time I pray—and I often speak it with confidence.

Are you able to pray with confidence, or do you feel too unworthy to have your prayers answered? Can you come boldly before the Lord and bring your concerns and burdens to Him, or do you struggle with feelings of condemnation or unworthiness? How can you pray with assurance when you know you’re far from perfect?

The Prayers of the Righteous To begin with, our righteousness comes from who we are in the Lord and our relationship with Him. It’s based on what Christ has accomplished on the cross. Once we have surrendered our lives to Christ, we are then free to receive forgiveness for our sins—past, present, and future. He paid the penalty for our sin. That is our firm foundation!

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Rom. 3:22). We are able to pray in confidence because of our position of righteousness in Christ! How freeing this is! I don’t have to be perfect to come before the throne of grace. In Hebrews 10:19–23 we read:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience . . . for he who promised is faithful.

I don’t care what life you’ve lived or how many heinous sins you’ve committed. If you’ve dedicated your life to God and truly serve the Lord Jesus, you can pray in confidence. Some translations of Hebrews 10:19 use the word “boldness.” Picture yourself boldly coming before Jesus seated on His throne. Do you understand what this means? No matter how hard Satan tries to condemn you, you can refute his lies! You can pray for whatever is on your heart and know that God is listening. We have that privilege.

But I’m Not Perfect

There is a second part of righteousness. Living righteously means conforming to God’s standard of right and wrong. It means making a decision to live out the principles in the Bible. We cannot live life our way and expect God to answer our prayers. “The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous” (Prov. 15:29).

We are not perfect! In Romans 7:19 Paul wrote that the things he wanted to do he didn’t do, and the things he didn’t want to do were the things he found himself doing. Isn’t that the truth! We are flawed people. No matter how we try, we can never live a perfect life, not on this side of heaven. That’s

why it is so awesome that our righteousness is based on what Christ has done. Thank God He doesn't expect perfection!

Faith and righteousness go hand in hand. Righteousness is faith being lived out. True faith in the Lord will lead to righteous living. We can't claim to have faith in the Lord and live life our way. Fully surrendering means making a conscious decision to walk under the direction of God, as He would have us live.

At the same time, our righteousness comes by faith in Christ. The English word "righteous" originated from an old Anglo-Saxon word, rihtwis, which meant right wise. The Old Testament Hebrew word that is translated as "righteous" means lawful, or clean. Both of these have to do with the idea of right choices.

Repentance and Confession

Because of our sinful tendencies, confession and repentance need to play a large part in our prayer lives. Repentance means making a decision to turn around and go in a different direction. Understand that confession of sin does not bring about forgiveness. We don't fall out of forgiveness every time we sin. Forgiveness is included in our position in Christ.

But confession and repentance are important in keeping us humble before the Lord and keeping our lives on the track God intends. I picture our lives like a car. If you take your hands off the steering wheel it will begin to veer, be it ever so slightly. Eventually, you'll be going totally in the wrong direction. Confession is like keeping our hands on the steering wheel. It keeps us on the right path.

I almost always begin my prayer time with "soul searching" and confession. I ask God to put a spotlight on my life and bring to mind areas where I need to confess to the Lord. Sometimes nothing needing confession comes to mind. Sometimes it does. It may be a sinful thought or a wrongly spoken word.

I remember one incident that happened to me years ago before I was married. I had a friend staying over for the night and the two of us had a bit of a heated conversation. We both then went to bed mad. Before I dozed off I decided to pray. I opened my Bible to Matthew 5. There, in verses 23 and 24, Jesus tells us that if we're offering a gift to God and remember an offense we have against another person, we're to leave the gift, fix the offense, and then come back to offer the gift to the Lord.

I got out of bed and went into my friend's room. To my surprise, she was crying. I apologized to her and we made up. I needed to clear that offense up before I spent time with God.

Stand Against Lies

Once I have confessed and set things right, I can continue in prayer knowing that I am cleansed. I remind myself that my position in Christ gives me the right to pray! If the enemy has tried to convince me there is an area of my life that makes me unworthy to enter into prayer, in faith I take back that territory. I do this by specifically standing against his lies. I will often verbally claim Scriptures that support my spiritual right as a follower of Christ to enter into prayer.

Be aware that attacking our worthiness to approach Christ is one of the primary methods Satan uses to try to destroy our prayer lives. It's not unusual for him to whisper how sinful we are and try to bring a feeling of condemnation. "Again, you fell!" "You'll never overcome this!" Scripture refers to him as the "accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). I've prayed with countless sisters and brothers in Christ who are so caught up in these particular lies of the enemy that they feel unworthy to pray. What a liar Satan is! Of course we might need to alter our life choices, but as we understand our position in Christ, we can and should be bold in our prayers in the throne room of

God!

For others Satan brings the lure of self-confidence and pride. Their focus is solely on their relationship in the Lord and they've neglected the righteous living the Word speaks of. They need to choose to follow the principles of the Word of God and determine to make life changes.

Both of these lies are dangerous and need to be severely dealt with in order to have an effective and dynamic prayer life.

Appropriate Confession

There are occasions when we need to confess publically before others. I've seen this misused, however. We're not expected to—nor should we—confess all our sins publically. We need to be wise in this area.

I've seen people confess things that were totally inappropriate and not helpful, either for the person confessing, or for those hearing them. One man confessed sexual sin that had occurred many years ago to a room of mostly children, many of whom were his Sunday school students. Another confessed sin in a church service that should have been confessed in private. None of these people ever asked or even told the pastors or leaders of their intentions. They were acting out of condemnation and guilt.

There are times, though, when we do need to publicly confess our sins and shortcomings to others. It's important to first ask a pastor or leader you respect and trust for direction and counsel.

A time of confession and repentance should also be included in a group prayer meeting. It's a good idea to give a time of quiet reflection before people are asked to pray. Ask God to put a spotlight on the lives of those in the room. Unconfessed sin will hinder prayer, both personal and corporately.

When we really understand the concept of righteous living, both in our positions in Christ and our daily life choices, tremendous freedom comes into play. Our prayer lives are able to rise to an amazing level. God is honored, we are blessed, and results are seen!

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