

BEING MINDFUL OF TRUTH AND ERROR ... part three

We make our beginning in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
"Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God." (Joshua 3:9)
Dear Lord God, Sanctify us in Your truth, Your Word is truth. (John 17:17)
We ask that Your Word would be a blessing to our lives. Amen.

When a bank trains new employees to detect counterfeit dollar bills, they don't focus on an examination of the counterfeit bills. They focus on studying and examining the genuine article, the real dollar bills, because when a bank employee really knows the genuine article, it's easier to recognize the counterfeits. When you know the real thing, it is more difficult to be deceived.

This Bible lesson will look at the difference between real prayer and counterfeit prayer. We will look at the counterfeit that was issued by the Roman Catholic Church and we will look at the error on which this counterfeit was based. Then we will examine the genuine article of prayer as taught by God in His Word, because along with knowledge and understanding, comes discernment which is the ability to recognize the difference between the truth and an error.

Philippians 1:9-10 It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

We've all seen courtroom scenes on TV when a witness is being sworn in before testifying to the judge and the jury. The witness places a hand on the Bible, and swears to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help me, God.' By taking this oath, the witness makes a commitment and a promise to speak only the truth. It is a legal offense to lie to the court. Shouldn't the church also 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' to its people?

In this Bible lesson, we will learn that the Roman Catholic Church uses 1 Kings 2:19-20 to teach a counterfeit doctrine that it is correct and proper to pray to or through Mary. We will learn that 1 Kings 2:21-25 tells the rest of the story which actually reveals the error of this Catholic teaching, so we will see that they have failed to teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

After examining the Roman Catholic Church's counterfeit doctrine about prayer, we will examine the genuine article – the truth about prayer as taught to us by God in His Word.

400 years ago, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic priest and professor theology, nailed an historically important paper on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. He wrote his radical '95 Theses' to express his growing concern with corruption within the Roman Catholic Church. In essence, he called for reforms of the errors in the Catholic Church. His statements served as the catalyst for the eventual breaking away from the Catholic Church and were instrumental in forming the movement known as the Protestant Reformation.

Truth and Error, part one, reminded us that we are saved by God's grace and saved by faith. We are not saved by works. Part two reminded us that Mary understood that she, too, was a sinner in need of forgiveness and salvation. She was not worthy of special honor or adoration.

In this Bible lesson, we will examine the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine regarding praying to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The 'proof text' that is used to justify praying 'to or through' Mary is in 1 Kings. They teach that, based on this text, Jesus will not refuse anything His mother asks Him.

1 Kings 2:19-20 So Bathsheba (Solomon's mother) went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me," And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you."

According to the principle of 'telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', it is extremely important to also read the next five verses. The next verses actually reveal that Solomon DID NOT grant his mother's request, in fact, quite the opposite. Let's continue reading.

1 Kings 2:21-25 Bathsheba said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as his wife."

King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruah."

Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "God do so to me and more also if this word does not cost Adonijah his life! Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he struck him down, and he died.

There are several names in these verses and some political situations in the background that may be unfamiliar, so to enable us to fully understand the 'whole truth' of this important episode, we will first have an Old Testament history lesson. Everything that God has placed in Scripture presents something for our learning, to give us a spiritual truth for our spiritual benefit.

Who are all these people?

David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Their first son died as God's punishment for David's sin of causing Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, to be killed in battle.

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba. David had promised Bathsheba that Solomon would reign as king after his death, (1 Kings 1:17). This promise was made according to God's will. This is understood as truth because Solomon is an ancestor of Jesus, (Matthew 1:6-7).

Adonijah was the oldest surviving son of King David, so he was one of Solomon's half-brothers. As the oldest, he felt entitled to be the next king. When David was very old, Adonijah made an attempt to set himself up as the next king. His attempt was discovered by Nathan the prophet who notified Bathsheba and King David. David quickly advised Nathan to anoint Solomon as king and give him the throne. The people responded with loud celebration and rejoicing.

Abishag the Shunammite . . . In David's old age, he was plagued with circulatory problems. Even with extra covers, he "could not get warm", (1Kings 1:1). In harmony with the medical customs of that day, a young virgin nurse was appointed to care for him and keep him warm at night with her own body heat. Although in appearance she had become part of King David's harem, Abishag remained a virgin, for "the king did not know her", (1 Kings 1:4). She was from the town of Shunem and "was very lovely", (1 Kings 1:4).

Why did Bathsheba ask Solomon to give Abishag to Adonijah?

Adonijah's first attempt to declare himself as the king had failed, so when Solomon was made the king, Adonijah feared for his life, because often, in the ancient Near East, potential claimants to the throne and their families were put to death because they presented a threat to

the reigning king. King Solomon had mercifully spared Adonijah's life on the condition that he pay homage to the king and give up his claim to the throne, (1 Kings 1:52-53). Adonijah went to Bathsheba and acknowledged that Solomon had received the throne "from the LORD" (1 Kings 2:15). But he wanted Bathsheba to ask Solomon to give him Abishag for a wife, (1 Kings 2:17).

What was the political background behind Bathsheba's request to Solomon?

If Adonijah had become king, the lives of Bathsheba and Solomon would have been in jeopardy because it was common in the ancient Near East for a ruler to liquidate all potential claimants to the throne in an attempt to secure his position. In addition, possession of the royal harem was a sign of kingship for it signified the right of succession to the throne. Adonijah's request to have Abishag for his wife was an attempt to support his claim to the kingship and perhaps generate a revolt to usurp the throne. When Bathsheba agreed to present Adonijah's request to Solomon, she had not understood the treachery of Adonijah's request. Even though he had bowed down to King Solomon (1 Kings 1:53), Adonijah had clearly not forsaken his desire to be the next king. Solomon immediately understood Adonijah's request for what it was – a threat to his rule as king of the nation of Israel, an attempt to gain his throne. Adonijah was therefore a dire political threat to King Solomon's position. Adonijah's request cost him his life.

To summarize this episode, before he even knew what his mother would ask him, Solomon said he would not refuse his mother's request. Solomon's statement to Bathsheba was incorrectly applied by the Catholic Church to Jesus and Mary. When Solomon heard and understood his mother's request, he immediately changed his position. When we know and understand the 'rest of the story', we understand that this incident cannot support praying to or through Mary.

But, of course, there are other reasons why we do not address our prayers to or through Mary. Always in the Bible, throughout all the Old Testament and throughout all the New Testament, all the prayers of God's people were directed to the one true God. The first prayer mentioned in the Bible is **Genesis 4:26**, "To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD." As people realized their sinful nature, they turned to God for mercy and grace in hopes of a restored personal relationship with Him. This personal relationship with God had been lost after the very first sin of Adam and Eve.

The Bible records prayers of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Hannah, Samuel, Solomon, Elijah, Hezekiah, Zechariah, and many others, even Jesus. All of their prayers were directed to God.

Judges 6:39-40 Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Luke 23:42-43 And he (the thief on the cross) said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

God alone hears our prayers.

1 Kings 9:3 And the LORD said to him, (to Solomon), "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

2 Kings 19:20 NIV Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria."

Psalms 65:2 O you who hears prayer, to you shall all flesh come.

God alone answers our prayers.

1 Samuel 1:27 For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. (This was Hannah's prayer.)

Psalms 91:15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

Isaiah 58:9 You shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

Jeremiah 33:2-3 Thus says the LORD who made the earth, the LORD who formed it to establish it - the LORD is his name: Call to me and I will answer you.

Zechariah 13:9 They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'

Matthew 7:7-8 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Whatever you ask of God in prayer, the Father will answer.

Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 18:19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

John 16:23-24 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

We have direct access to the Father through Jesus.

Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we have direct access to our Father whenever we pray.

Mark 15:37-38 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. (The curtain of separation was no longer required.)

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both (Jew & Gentile) have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 3:12 in whom we have boldness & access with confidence through our faith in him.

God alone knows our needs, even before we ask.

Psalms 94:10-12 He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who teaches man knowledge - the LORD - knows the thoughts of man.

Isaiah 65:24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Matthew 6:8 Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

God alone is our intercessor.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:34 Christ Jesus is the one who died - more than that, who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Prayer is worship.

Matthew 6:9-13 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"

Godly prayer is worship – we acknowledge His sovereign will and our utter dependence on Him, we confess His glory and our sin, we affirm our reliance on His wisdom, His grace, His power, His preservation, His protection, and we confess our own weakness. The God-centered nature of the Lord's Prayer is this: Your name, Your kingdom, Your will. The purpose of all prayer is God's honor, God's purpose, God's glory. Prayer is how we speak to God. Prayer is the highest form of worship that an individual can participate in because prayer is saying, 'God, Your name, Your kingdom, Your will be elevated; not my will, not my wants, not my kingdom, not my name.'

Luke 4:8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" (Jesus said this to Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness.)

Our faith is not a 'religion'; it is a relationship with our God. He is a constant FRIEND who listens, cares, understands us, walks with us, carries us in difficult times, and wants to spend time with us.

For all who have friends and family who are deceived by a counterfeit, we commend them to God in prayer, asking Him to open their eyes to see God's truth & bless them with discernment.

Prayer: Our Father, We give You adoration and praise for Your great love. We are so thankful for Your listening ears, Your caring heart, and Your ability to provide all that we need in this life. Thank You for being our constant and best Friend who loves us with a perfect and constant love. Thank You for caring and listening to our every prayer and answering them according to Your perfect will for us. We confess all our sins to You, knowing that, because Jesus completed everything that was required for our salvation, You freely and completely forgive all our sins. We ask You to grant salvation to those who do not know Your truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**As you go today, may God go with you; Before you, to show you the way;
Behind you, to encourage you; Beside you, to befriend you; Above you, to watch over you;
Beneath you, to uphold you; and especially, Within you, to continue to give you His peace.**

Closing Hymn: 770 in the Lutheran Service Book What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit; Oh, what needless pain we bear –
All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged - Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness - Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge - Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In His arms He'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there.