

But **prayer** is also a **vital element**. We must know God and commune with Him, **drawing strength** from Him personally to live the supernatural life as we lean on and **trust in Him in faith**. When we approach God in prayer, the **first action** is to **bow in contrition**, to humble ourselves as we approach His divine majesty, and in fearful reverence we come in dependence and weakness, **seeking His divine power and presence** for strength. We come **yielding** to His will, **submissive** and lowly realizing our great need for His grace and favor to even approach Him, much less live out His awesome commandments. In fact, one central purpose in prayer is to realign or reorient our thinking with God's, to reform and renew our will in accordance with His. This happens largely **through the act of contrition** and humility, because that is the central issue with God, what is our posture or disposition, **our heart attitude** before Him. Once we have realigned our posture to submissive yielding, we are in that place to fellowship with Him, free to receive His grace and rejoice in His goodness and love to us, and to relish in His good promises to forgive us, and provide for us and be our God! The proud do not enjoy this benefit, for they do not perceive God's goodness or His grace and blessing because He is opposed to them, only giving grace to the humble. Think what madness it is that we would barge into God's throne room demanding our will and barking out commands for Him to align Himself with our selfish ambitions! Another way to say this is **prayer** is first a humble **dependence** on God, approaching Him is contrition for help in our daily time of need. We must become disciplined in this action of prayer and learn to daily look to God for strength to live according to His will. This we learned from Jesus, who was constantly in prayer, looking to God for guidance and grace! Consider what He taught us about the posture of prayer in the Lord's prayer of Matthew chapter 6.

Matthew 6:9-13 - 9 "Pray, then, in this way: **'Our Father** who art **in heaven, Hallowed** be Thy name. 10 **'Thy kingdom** come. **Thy will be done, On earth** as it is in heaven. 11 **'Give us this day** our daily bread. 12 **'And forgive us** our debts, as **we also have forgiven** our debtors. 13 **'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.] NASB

How clearly we see that the whole nature of our posture and disposition is one of **submissive yielding** to His Kingship, and in **dependence and weakness by faith** looking to God for daily bread and daily forgiveness and daily deliverance from sin and temptation. We must **learn to commune with God daily in prayer** if we will have the strength to live in a manner worthy of our calling as Christians.

Further, we have been **adopted into God's family, the church**, and **placed as a member by God** into the church as a vital part of it. It is essential for effective Christian living to have **regular fellowship with godly Christians**. We are not lone ranger Christians, the Bible knows nothing of the sort. It is a vital discipline of Christian life to be plugged into the life of the **local church** for the purpose of living out the **one another commands** of Scripture. This cannot be done by any other means, because the one another commands of the New Testament are focused on our relationship to other Christians in the church. God has designed the body of Christ in such a way that our love and service to them and their love and service to us is a fundamental and **essential means of grace** for living a fruitful Christian life. Without the mutual encouragement for spiritual life that the church provides, we will not have sufficient means to fulfill our calling as defined in the New Testament. Also, without **our regular love and service** to both individual Christians and the **corporate body of Christ**, we will be largely disobedient to Christ and the apostolic commands because there is no other way to carry out many of these precepts. This is because the **context of these precepts** is in **our relation** to the **local church**. Consider the nature

of the early church's fellowship and the New Testament teaching about the way in which our membership in the local church fulfills our role in it, specific precepts in regard to it.

Acts 2:41-47 - 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they were continually **devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching** and **to fellowship**, to **the breaking of bread and to prayer**. 43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And **all those who had believed were together**, and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were **sharing them with all, as anyone might have need**. 46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were **taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God**, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. NASB

1 Corinthians 12:12-15 - 12 For even as **the body is one and yet has many members**, and **all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body**, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For **the body is not one member, but many**. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," **it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body**. NASB

Colossians 3:15-17 - 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, **to which indeed you were called in one body**; and be thankful. 16 Let the **word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching** and **admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. NASB

It is very important then that we become **disciplined** in our **regular fellowship in the local church**, and disciplined in both our commitment to the love and service of our fellow believers, as well as receiving the their love and service to us.

See then how important these **three basic disciplines** are in the Christian life. If you are focused on God and His will (**daily meditation on the Word**), and daily seeking to live in dependence on His presence and power to walk in His ways (**daily communion with God in prayer**), and regularly being encouraged and encouraging others in this godly living (**regular fellowship with godly Christians**), then you are equipped for growing in sanctification and bearing the image in your daily life. These three disciplines are **vital** to a fruitful and effective Christian life.

Therefore, since the **struggle for Christian character** and image bearing is largely **waged in the heart** (what is the disposition of your heart) **and mind** (taking every thought captive), with the end focused on **obedience to the Lordship of Christ**, we have seen how important it is to be **focused** on our **posture before God** in our daily Christian living. Are we **humble** and contrite with a **submissive** and servant like mindset, a **heart the sees its great need for divine grace** and help to live the supernatural life of the Spirit, seeking to live according to God's will for our life? Or are we **proud** and **self-reliant**, living life according to the **dictates of our own selfish ambitions** and in the strength of the flesh, thinking that we are largely in control of our lives and pursuing our own glory, comfort and desires (lusts)? In the end, the **real struggle** is for that **throne of our hearts** and who is ruling there, and what is our heart attitude before God, as we approach our daily lives. This puts the **war against pride at the forefront** of our living, seeking to kill the great beast of pride taking self from off the throne, and surrendering to King Jesus in **humble child-like faith**, that **He may rule** in our hearts by faith. We have seen the great necessity of a disciplined life of **renewing the mind in the Word of God** to know His will and stay focused upon it, and to look to Him **daily in prayer and fellowship with Him**, drawing strength from Him (God dependent effort) to live in obedience to His will. And we have seen the great need for the help of others in **regular fellowship** with those who desire to do God's will and encourage and help one another in the struggle for obedient living. Remember Peter's