

Biblical precedents for praying in, or for, a house

Blessing

The most specific reference for blessing is Matt 10 vs12 & 13: *“As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.”* This was part of Jesus’ instruction to the Twelve as they went out, having been given authority by Jesus to, “drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matt 10 v1). Thus, we are commanded to bless the house of a “worthy” person with God’s peace.

There are many examples in the Old Testament of God blessing someone’s house - which can mean house, household, or family line. A household can also attract God’s blessing by employing/entertaining a Godly person, like Joseph in Gen 39 vs2 & 5.

The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ⁵From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

The rewards for obedience to God are listed as blessings in Deut 28 v1-13.

If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. ²All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

³You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

⁴The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

⁵Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

⁶You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

⁷The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

⁸The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

⁹The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. ¹¹The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you.

¹²The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. ¹³The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.

Many of these blessings happen in the house, household and family line.

The need for personal spiritual protection

We are familiar with Eph 6 vs10-18 where Paul exhorts us to put on all of God’s armour because we are in a spiritual battle with a powerful (but defeated) enemy, the devil. On many occasions, Jesus cast demons out of people and healed those “oppressed by the devil,” - many of them Jews, the people of God. People then and now need protection and deliverance from demonic activity. From Matt 12 v22 onwards, Jesus healed a demon possessed man (v22), and in answering the Pharisees accusation that he was healing “by Beelzebub,” he gives information about how the healing is done in v29. *“...How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.”* Jesus gives more instruction in vs43-45 where deliverance is only completed when a person puts a stronger force (God) in control of his life (or “house”).

Is there a need for spiritual protection of a home or other place?

The accounts in the Old Testament of Joshua and Nehemiah are clearly historical. However, they are both frequently used as examples of personal spiritual preparation, defence and warfare - one specifically offensive, the other, defensive. But, in both instances, the thing being attacked is not a person but a place. Consequently, we may deduce from these passages that God also has spiritual truths to teach us regarding overcoming strongholds of the enemy in places as well as people, and the protection of homes, churches and other Christian buildings from undermining or attack by the enemy.

Binding and Loosing

In Matt 16 v19, Jesus says to Peter, *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* As with *“binding the strong man,”* (Matt 12 v29) so here, Jesus delegates his power and authority to us, His disciples. From Pentecost on, things Jesus said to one or more of the Twelve are applied to all disciples. We have the responsibility to bind evil and its outworking and to loose God’s love, power and kingdom and here in Matt 16 it is to be done in a place - *“on earth.”* Houses are part of *“on earth,”* thus this Scripture can be understood to include them.

Cleansing Lev 14 v33 to 15 v31

In this passage, God gives His people very detailed instructions for the physical cleansing of a house, clothing or skin disease. Physical evils needed to be dealt with specifically and radically to protect the physical lives of God’s chosen people. Chapter 15, verse 31 commands this, *“You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.”* There is a direct link here between things (if clothing, and furniture, why not houses?) that are unclean and our personal uncleanness.

Should we not take the cleansing and spiritual protection of our homes, clothing and bodies just as seriously? For example, at a Mind Body Soul Exhibition, my daughter and I were prayer walking before returning to our Christian stall. We stopped to admire some extraordinarily beautiful clothing and jackets at a stall. The lady proudly told us, *“Each one has an individual prayer and (occult) charm worked into it!”* Thinking we’d be delighted, she asked which stall we were with. When I told her, her eyes, and face *“clanged shut.”* She realised she had given information to the ‘wrong side’! We must not be fearful but we must be wise and alert as *“our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”* (1 Pet 1 v8).

What if the Bible does not specifically command or prohibit something

There is no command in the Bible not to smoke. We know that smoking is bad for the smoker’s health and also for those around. Here we apply 1 Cor 6 vs19 & 20 to teach that smoking is unwise, potentially addictive and unhealthy, and that we have a responsibility for what we do with the body God has given us: *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own, ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

How many Christians today would say that slavery is right and that God endorses it? Yet, nowhere in Scripture is slavery condemned - only limited, and with challenges to slave owners! We see clearly from the Old Testament that God’s revelation concerning salvation is progressive, taking about two millennia to prepare the Jews for their Messiah. It took mankind 1,800 more years for the Holy Spirit to sharpen our consciences and compassion to begin in the late 18th Century to say that slavery is WRONG! John comments at the end of his Gospel about all the things Jesus did. *“If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written”* (John 21 v25). This verse could equally be said of the commands, and instructions needed for every event in life for every person in every age in every nation.

Church traditions and practice

In a reaction to superstition or anything which could be deemed *“unsound”* or *“extreme,”* over the centuries, many Protestant denominations have abandoned practices which are Scriptural and were practiced by the early church, for example, fasting and exorcism. Jesus didn’t say *“if you fast,”* but *“when you fast”* - a spiritual discipline which has so lapsed that many Christians today need a *“how to”* book for guidance. Although practiced within the Anglican Church (many Dioceses have appointed Deliverance Advisers) and a few small groups elsewhere – exorcism is a ministry commanded by Jesus of His followers in Matt 10 v 7 and demonstrated in the Book of Acts, but it is one that most Churches have not and do not practice today. This is a serious loss, both for ourselves (for building up the Church) and for reaching out into the community. These post-modern times include a spirituality not recognised in previous generations and it is a spirituality detached from the absolutes of historic Christianity. This detached spirituality perceives the need for *“clean houses”*, and uses methods from other religions to deal with the *“bad vibes”* (or whatever term they want to

use). It is time for the Church to reclaim the Biblical practice of praying cleansing into people's homes, for their own well-being and that of the building, and to indicate the power of the Holy Spirit in today's world.

Binding and loosing always need careful handling and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 16 v19 is more correctly translated "will have been bound", i.e. it takes place in the heavens before on Earth. However, it is interesting to note that many commentators see this as referring to Church authority and rules (this additional sentence by Charlie Kosla)!

The early Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland had beautiful, simple prayers for almost every aspect of living - for lighting a fire, for welcoming a guest, for going out, for coming in. Many were simple prayers of blessing - for the fire, the food, the house - which were a way of living one's life centred on God throughout the day. Other prayers were for protection. The best known is probably "St Patrick's breastplate." These early Christians were aware of powerful spiritual forces opposing them and the need for God's protection and blessing. Today powerful spiritual forces still seek entrance to pollute homes and minds through TV, films, the Internet, music, books and newspapers. Protection, cleansing and then spiritual replacement with God's blessings are still needed.

Applying the Word of God to specific situations.

The Bible is the written Word of God. The Lord Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Who speaks to our consciences and Who brings the written Word alive to and in us, creating the *"Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"* (Eph 6 v17). Prayer is always the first, middle and last key! Daniel and his three friends were enabled to witness and withstand persecution because their lives were based on disciplined prayer. And Daniel trusted God to reveal what was needed which, humanly speaking, Daniel did not know or understand. In Dan 2 vs21 & 22, he praises God who *"gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. ²²He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness...."*

In Acts, Chapter 15, at the Council of Jerusalem, James, leader of the Church in Jerusalem, weighs Peter's report against Scripture then draws a conclusion as described in Acts 15 v 19: *"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God...."* He then gives four simple commands for new Gentile converts. Then the Apostles, elders and the whole Church chose men to go to Antioch with a letter, in which they all say, *"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...."* (Acts 15 v29). What James said earlier is now recognised by the whole Church as being from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes God's answer or decision is recognised instantly, at other times, the recognition comes with hindsight and time.

Is God doing a 'New Thing' or reviving an earlier practice?

There are many paradoxes in the Christian faith. One is the nature of God, *"who does not change like shifting shadows"* (James 1 v17) yet delights to do *"...a new thing..."* (Isaiah 43 v19) or, *"...puts a new song in my mouth..."* (Ps 40 v3). There are also times when He says, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past" (Isaiah 43 v18).

The Union of Evangelical Churches (a denomination of 15 Churches throughout Essex and east and southeast London), has a Godly heritage. Their roots go back to the Peculiar People of the 19th and 20th Centuries. In his preface to the book, *The Peculiar People*, Gilbert Kirby says, "... in a sense, they led the way for the charismatic movement of our time." Faith, healings and miracles of provision, along with the joy of the Lord were hallmarks of many Peculiar's lives. My daughter's grand-parents and great-grand parents were Peculiar's in Cressing. Great-Gran, Florence Cutmore told me in 1973 how, in her youth (1890/1900?), members would "jump the pews," filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit! There must be several things which this small denomination did and believed as 'usual' which have now been forgotten or fallen out of fashion - leaping over pews being one!

Faith, the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Whatever our difficulties, challenges or decisions, we need to walk closely with the Lord. We need to hear His voice - for wisdom, direction or revelation. We hear Him as we pray, read the Bible, discuss with other Christians or maybe through pictures, dreams or visions - like Daniel, Ezekiel, Peter and others. We have all known times when the Holy Spirit brings an individual passage alive in a new way or makes it relevant to a particular situation. He is also near to teach us how to use the Word as a spiritual sword, to see people and places set free from the enemy and brought under God's rule. *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"* (2 Cor 3 v17). Our part is to pray, weigh and step out in faith, trusting God.

Jesus made it clear that we do not live in a neutral 'spiritual soup.' There are two distinct kingdoms - God's and Satan's. All people are in one or the other, whether or not they think they have made a clear choice. Jesus gives the warning in Matt 12 v 43-45. It is no good, in fact it is worse, if we cast something out without the person inviting the Lord Jesus

Christ to come in to their heart and their home as Lord and continuing to follow and obey Him. He is the greater power. It is in the name of Jesus that troublesome evil powers are ousted. Permanent relief is **only** possible if He is put in the place previously occupied by the spirit/s. There is no spiritual “neutral”.

If we disregard Jesus' teaching in this passage, we place the person at risk: “it...takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first” (Matt 12 v45). If the person asking for help is unwilling to make Jesus Christ the Lord of their life then we do have the delegated authority of Jesus to **bind** the spirit/s, to silence them and limit their power but not to remove them.

Rosemary Loy