

# Theology of Prayer

## I. PRAYER

### A. Theology: The God Who Hears our Prayers

1. The Independence of God (Ps. 50:10-12): God alone is independent and self-sufficient!

a) Therefore, God does not need us to pray to Him. We do it to declare our dependence on Him. Prayer is God's language of relationship with His creation, so a life of prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from Him.

b) "Prayer is designed as a confession to Him of our sense of need" (A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 171)

2. The Eternality of God (Psalm 90; Isa. 40:27-31): God is outside of time, He has no beginning or end "and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 168).

a) Since God is uninfluenced by time, He responds to our prayers in His timing according to what He deems best from His complete perspective outside of time.

b) God answers in His own time. Jesus allowed Lazarus to die so that God would be glorified by the miracle of raising him from the dead (John 11:1-6)

3. The Immutability of God (Psalm 102:1-28): "He can neither increase nor decrease. He is subject to no process of development, or of self-evolution. His knowledge and power can never be greater or less. He can never be wiser or holier, or more righteous or more merciful than He ever has been and ever must be" (Hodge, 390).

a) Since God is unchanging, we do not pray to change Him or His ordained will (Job 42:2; Ecc. 3:14-15; Dan. 4:34-35)

b) Prayer is not designed to change God or His ordained plans, but us and our plans (Prov. 16:9)

4. The Omniscience of God (Ps. 139:1-6): God knows all things actual and possible in the past, present, and future simultaneously. Amazing!

a) Since God knows everything, we should not pray to inform Him or foolishly offer our counsel to Him. God has complete and perfect knowledge and is therefore positioned to best evaluate our requests.

b) God knows what we are going to pray before we pray (Matt 6:8)

c) "Prayer is not for the purpose of informing God, as if He were ignorant, but it is to acknowledge that He knows what we are in need of." (Pink, 171)

d) God receives counsel from no one (Rom. 11:34); God's design of prayer is not that His ways be altered but accomplished

e) God answers prayer His own way. Paul prayed for his thorn to be removed but God instead gave him more grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

5. The Omnipotence of God (Jer. 32:17-27): Prayer in of itself has no power, but prayer is powerful because God is powerful!!! Prayer is the means through which that divine power is released.

a) Since God is completely able and powerful, we should pray confidently in faith knowing that God has the ability to do whatever we ask.

b) Prayers offered in faith have the ability to move mountains (Matt. 17:20)

c) "Prayer is the most powerful thing in the universe. It has more force than electricity, carries more pole than gravity, and moves with more intensity than the wild sea" (Charles Spurgeon).

6. The Sovereignty of God (1 Tim. 6:15-16): "When we say that God is sovereign we affirm His right to govern the universe, which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases." (A.W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, 21).

a) God is sovereign over nature (Gen. 1:1; Job 37:3-13; Amos 4:7-9).

b) God controls the rulers of nations (1 Chron. 5:26; Prov. 21:1).

c) God controls entire nations (Ps. 33:10-11; Isa. 40:15).

d) God is sovereign over the course of history (Isa. 46:10).

e) God sovereignly uses evil for His good (Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28).

f) God is sovereign over the plans and actions of people (Pr. 16:9; Jam. 4:13-17).

g) God is sovereign over the hearts and wills of people (Rom. 9:18).

h) Therefore: "God's sovereignty does not negate our responsibility to pray, but rather makes it possible to pray with confidence" (Bridges, Trusting God, 108).

## B. The Purpose of Prayer

### 1. Prayer is communion with our Father in heaven (worship)

a) Prayer is an expression of our love for our Father in heaven. Our purpose for prayer is God Himself, the reward of His presence.

b) Prayer is communion with God, so that there will be common thoughts between His mind and ours. We need to fill our hearts with His thoughts, and then His desires will become our desires flowing back to Him (John 15:7).

c) "The greatest tragedy in life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer" (Fred B. Meyer).

2. Prayer is a way to ask God for what we need (supplication) and others need (intercession)

a) Prayer is a means to receive our needs from God and expressing dependence (Matt. 6:11-13).

b) Prayer is a means to intercede for others; for their needs, salvation, protection, etc.

c) Prayer is coming to God with our needs and desires along with others and then trusting God will deal with them as He sees fit according to what will bring Him the most glory.

3. Prayer is a means to shape the desires/will of believers (Matt. 26:39; John 15:5-7)  
- "*Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.*" (Martin Luther).

4. Prayer is a means God uses to accomplish His will.

a) From our perspective, God changes circumstances when we pray.

b) "*History belongs to the intercessors who prayer the future into being*" (Walter Wink).

c) "*Prayer is rebellion against the status quo . . . it is the refusal of every agenda, scheme, interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God*" (David Wells).

b) "God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment" (Pink, 171).

### C. Ineffective Prayer

1. Prayers offered while living a life of sin are not heard (Ps. 66:18; Is. 1:15; Micah. 3:4).

2. Prayers prayed in conformity with our will or with wrong motives are rejected (Jam. 4:1-3).

3. Prayers of the unbelieving (Matt. 21:22). God will not hear the prayers of the wicked or things inconsistent with His will.

4. Prayers offered in vain repetition (Matt. 6:7).

## D. Effective Prayer

### 1. Prayers that humbly acknowledge His holiness and sovereignty

- a) God dwells with those who have a humble and contrite heart (Isa. 57:15).
- b) God gives grace to those who humbly approach Him (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).
- c) God has an eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11); He is not working toward our purpose, but His eternal purpose to bring Him glory.
- d) He does whatever He pleases according to His will, not our will (Ps.135:6; Dan. 4:34-35).

### 2. Prayers offered in faith without doubting

- a) Jesus said if we had faith of a mustard seed we could move mountains (Matt. 21:22).
- b) The prayer of faith has the power to save the sick (Jam. 5:15).
- c) The prayer of a righteous person has great power because sin is not maligning their requests but faith is aligning their requests to God's desires (James 5:16; Prov. 15:8).

### 3. Prayers offered earnestly and consistently.

- a) Ask, seek knock and you will receive, find and it will be opened (Matt. 7:7-8; 10:38).
- b) God answers prayers from those who cry out to Him day and night (Persistent Widow- Luke 18:1-8).

### 4. Prayers prayed "In the Name of Jesus" (John 16:23).

- a) According to His authority and with His authority. Praying in light of who Christ is and what Christ has done (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:16).
- b) According to His will and not our will; setting our own desires aside and accepting God's will and desires.
- c) If we ask anything according to His will He hears us and if we know that He hears us we have what we have asked (1 John 5:14-15).
- d) For Christ's honor and benefit (Matt. 6:9-10).