

Week 43 – Prayer: Bringing Heaven to Earth

Prayer

Prayer, in its simplest form, is enjoying a talk with God. Prayer is perhaps the most important aspect of a Christian's life and yet, unfortunately, one of the most neglected. To have a good relationship with God, there must be good communication. Prayer bridges this "communication gap" with God and enables us as believers to make contact with our Creator.

In prayer, we experience God as He listens to us, responds to our requests, guides our praying, and oftentimes speaks to us. Prayer is the primary means through which God brings His purposes to pass. This alone should keep us praying. Because of its importance, we are encouraged to keep in an attitude of prayer.

"...rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer..." (Romans 12:12)

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving..." (Colossians 4:2)

This simple acrostic summarizes the elements prayer includes.

Although God certainly expects us to pray for ourselves and our needs, it is good for us to let our hearts go out to the Lord and on behalf of others first. A young lady once tried not to be self-centered in her prayer time but couldn't quite make it. She started her prayers by saying, "Lord, I am not going to focus on myself today, but on the needs of others." But at the conclusion of her prayer time, she added one last thing, "Please give my mother a real handsome son-in-law."

Probably the most well-known prayer, The Lord's Prayer, should more accurately be called the disciples' prayer. This is an excellent model prayer that covers our day as we look ahead. This prayer was not intended necessarily to be prayed by mechanical rote, but with a heart of faith.

Let's briefly look at this prayer from Matthew 6:9-13. In it, we can see some different aspects of prayers we offer up to God.

Paul wrote, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior..." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Peter wrote to worried readers, "...casting all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

We can find a number of sample prayers in the New Testament:

Prayers of Jesus – Matthew 11:25-27; Mark 11:2-4; John 17

Prayers of Paul – Ephesians 1:16-23; 3:14-19; Philippians 1:3-4

Protestant scholar John Calvin said this about prayer:

The fruit of prayer is fivefold.

1. When we are accustomed to fleeing to God, our heart is inflamed with a stronger desire to seek, love, and adore him.
2. Our heart is not prey to any wicked desire, of which we would be ashamed to make God our witness.
3. We receive his benefits with thanksgiving.
4. Having obtained a gift, we more earnestly meditate on the goodness of God.
5. Experience confirms to us the Goodness, Providence, and Truth of God.

The laws (of prayer) are Four.

1. That we should have our heart framed as becomes those who enter into converse with God; and therefore the lifting up of the hands, the raising of the heart, and perseverance are recommended.
2. That we should feel our wants.
3. That we should divest ourselves of every thought of our own glory, giving the whole glory to God.
4. That while we are prostrated amidst overwhelming evils, we should be animated by the sure hope of succeeding, since we rely on the command and promise of God. (100 Aphorisms)

Review

1. What is the primary vehicle God uses to bring His purposes to pass?
2. Which parts of the Lord's Prayer deal with the future? The present? The past?

3. Is God reluctant to hear and respond to us?