

I. PRAYER

A. Theology: The God Who Hear our Prayers

1. The Independence of God (Ps. 50:10-12): God alone is independent! God does not need us or the rest of creation!
 - a) Therefore, God does not need us to pray to 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 no 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 responses to our prayers in His timing according to what He deems best from His unaltered perspective outside of time.
 - b) God answers in His own time. Jesus allowed Lazarus to die so that God would 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 all at the same time.
 - 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 therefore sits in the best seat to evaluate what is best in light of 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 He does know 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 the 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): "God is all-powerful and able to do anything consistent with His own nature" (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 45).
 - a) Since God is completely able, 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)

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 works evil for His good (Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28)
 - f) God is sovereign over the plans and actions of man (Pr. 16:9; Jam. 4:13-17)
 - g) God is sovereign over the hearts and wills of man (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
 - 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)
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, for their salvation, for their protection, etc.
 - c) "Prayer is a coming to God, telling Him my need (or the need of others), committing my way unto the Lord, and then leaving Him to deal with the case as seemeth Him best." (Pink, 174).
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) "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; Mic. 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; Isa. 59:2)
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 your requests but faith is aligning your requests to God's desires (James 5:16; cf 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 of 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 own will. This means set our own desires aside and accept 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)