

DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

- I. Preliminary considerations.
- A. Prayer, like most of the doctrines in scripture, has suffered due to misconceptions and the religious reversionism of our time.
 - B. Since prayer constitutes one portion of our Divine Operating Assets, each communicator should teach this subject to those under his charge. Lk. 11:1
 - C. As with any other area of application and Divine good production, prayer must be approached according to the dictates of the Word of God, according to the dictum *action with honor*.
 - D. One very common misconception about prayer, based on a misunderstanding of John 15:7, is that prayer is some kind of “blank check”, which you fill in and God honors upon demand.
 - E. Another fallacious belief is that prayer is a system by which we seek to persuade God to acclimate to our thinking, or by which we try to force Him to do something we desire.
 - F. Prayer is also not a discipline by which we seek to get God to do something He does not want to do.
 - G. Standard human viewpoint about prayer includes:
 - 1. King James English is God’s choice as far as language is concerned.
 - 2. Repetitious phrases somehow impress God and get His attention.
 - 3. Posture affects how well God responds to our prayers.
 - 4. God is more inclined to listen if we are hungry (fasting).
 - 5. Long prayers impress God.
- II. Vocabulary.
- A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - 1. **חָלַח** (chalah), verb, lit. to be smooth or polished, it is used in the Piel stem and followed by the phrase **the face of** to express the idea of making the face serene or friendly, to make one pleasantly disposed toward another, to entreat his favor; when used of the Lord, it involves a prayer for mercy or help in the face of danger.
 - 2. **חָנַן** (chanan), verb, to be favorably disposed toward someone, to be gracious or have pity. This word is used in the hithpael to emphasize a request for pity or mercy, and followed by a **ל** of the person being asked.
 - a. **תְּחִינָה** (t^echinnah), f.noun, the cry or prayer for mercy or pity.
 - b. **תַּחֲנוּן** (tach^anun), m.noun, only used in the plural, similar to the preceding word, emphasizes the soul pressure that causes prayers for mercy or pity. Used in conjunction with weeping in Jere. 3:21, 31:9
 - 3. **פָּלַל** (palal), verb, in the Piel stem it means to judge, in the Hithpael it means to pray or intercede for another, to be a mediator, to pray to God on behalf of someone. This word and cognates are the most common words for prayer in the Old Testament. **תְּפִלָּה** (t^e-phillah), is a feminine noun, which means intercession, or prayer.

4. שָׁאַל (sha'al), verb, to ask, request or demand something. Repeatedly used in the Old Testament of individuals asking or failing to ask for God's advice or direction. This family emphasizes the need of the one asking and ability of the one being asked to meet the need.
 - a. שְׁאֵלָה (sh^e'elah), f.noun, 15X, a specific desire or request, a petition.
 - b. מִשְׁאָלָה (mish 'alah), m.noun, 2X, desire or petition. Ps. 20:5, 37:4
 5. עָתַר ('athar), verb, The Syriac means to smoke with perfume or incense, the Arabic means to breathe odors. This word emphasizes the concept of sacrifice and the pleasing effect it has on God. The prayers of a righteous believer being analogous to the offering of incense.
- B. Greek vocabulary.
1. αἰτέω (aiteo), verb, to ask, request or demand something. The cognate noun αἴτημα (aitema), is used 3X, and means a request or demand; it stresses the thing for which one asks.
 2. δεόμαι (deomai), verb, lit. to stand in need of something, to want something you lack. The nuance of this verb is to ask for something based on some pressing need. The cognate noun δέησις (deesis) is used 18X, and means a request or entreaty based on some urgency.
 3. ἐντυγχάνω (entugchano), verb, 5X, lit. to meet with someone for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication, to converse in a familiar fashion. This word emphasizes the familial relationship in prayer, a son meeting with his Father.
 - a. ἔντευξις (enteuxis), f.noun, 2X, an interview or conversation, coming together to consult.
 - b. ὑπερεντυγγάω (huperentugchano), verb, 1X, to make intercession for someone. Rom. 8:26
 4. ἱκετηρία (hiketeria), adj., 1X, lit. used in the Greek language of the olive branch that one held in his hand as he approached the one whom he was supplicating. This word stresses the abject humility and loyalty of the one making a request. Heb. 5:7
 5. εὐχομαι (euchomai), verb, generally to pray or request deity for something for yourself or someone else. This family of words is easily the most general and often used group of words for prayer in the New Testament. These terms stress the religious nature of prayer, the element of devotion as a man approaches God.
 - a. εὐχή (euche), f.noun, 3X, a prayer, oath, or vow.
 - b. προσεύχομαι (proseuchomai), verb, to pray, to talk to God.
 - c. προσευχή (proseuche), f.noun, prayer.
 6. ἐρωτάω (erotao), verb, originally meant to ask or question someone about something. This word stresses the fact that we lack certain facts and must bring our requests to God and rely on His answers.
- C. Note that Hebrew and Greek terms for praise and thanksgiving, which are all bona fide parts of prayer, are not included here.

III. Prayer in the Old Testament.

- A. The Old Testament makes it plain that those that acclimate to God and His plan have an audience with God. Ps. 6:9, 66:16-20; Prov. 15:8,29; Isa. 38:5
- B. Those that were maladjusted, be they believers or unbelievers, were not so regarded. Ps. 109:7; Prov. 15:29, 28:9; Isa. 1:15
- C. The Temple was regarded as the house of prayer. Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13
- D. The importance of prayer was taught, as many doctrines were, through the ritual of the Tabernacle. Ex. 30:1-10
 - 1. The altar of incense was the specified place where the incense was to be offered. Vs. 1
 - 2. Incense is analogous to prayer. Ps. 141:2; Rev.5:8
 - 3. The altar of incense was located in the holy place, which is analogous to the believer in time. Vs. 6
 - 4. The altar was made of wood overlaid with gold, which represents the hypostatic union. Vs. 1, 3
 - 5. This indicates that all prayers are to be offered through the person of Christ, the one mediator between God and man. Eph.2:18; Col. 3:17; Heb. 13:15
 - 6. The altar of incense was located directly in front of the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place. Vs. 6
 - 7. This teaches that in time we offer our prayers through the veil (Christ) to the unseen throne of Grace, which is located thousands of light years away.
 - 8. The incense that was offered was a specific combination of aromatic substances that was not to be altered. Vs. 34-36
 - 9. This is analogous to the content of prayer which is specified by the word of God.
 - 10. If one altered the formula and offered “strange incense”, he was excommunicated from the nation. Vs. 9
 - 11. This is designed to teach God’s attitude towards those who do not conform to the biblical content for prayer.
 - 12. Incense was not to be manufactured for one’s own private use, indicating that prayer is to be reserved for the priests (believers) and not for the common people (unbelievers).
 - 13. The order of worship, dictated by God, caused the priest to pass before the bronze altar, then the bronze laver, before proceeding to the holy place where the altar of incense was located. Vs. 17-20
 - 14. This aid is designed to teach that prayer is reserved only for believers and only for believers in fellowship.
 - 15. In the holy place, the priest needed the light from the golden lampstand in order to perform his duties before the Lord. Ex. 25:31ff
 - 16. In order for the believer to function effectively in time, he must have the illumination that the Holy Spirit provides.
 - 17. Only the prescribed fire from a bronze altar was to be used to ignite the incense. Lev. 16:12
 - 18. This indicates that God does not acknowledge the prayers of those who reject the cross. Lev. 10:1-5
- E. The negative example of King Uzziah further solidifies the doctrine that only qualified, authorized people may approach God. IIChron. 26:16-21
- F. The offering of incense to the gods of the Gentiles represented their prayers and devotions to someone other than the true God. IKings 3:3, 11:8, 22:43; IIKings 16:2-4

- IV. The protocol of prayer
 - A. The believer is to direct his prayers to God the father. Matt. 6:6,9; Eph. 3:14, 5:20
 - B. The believer is to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jn. 14:13, 15:16
 - 1. This does not mean that you must use this exact phrase, but that you are acknowledging His mediatorship. I Tim. 2:5
 - 2. Jesus encouraged the disciples to pray to the Father in His name. Jn. 16:23-24
 - C. The believer is to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 6:18; Jude 20
 - D. There is no New Testament precedent for addressing prayers to the Holy Spirit.

- V. The necessary disciplines of prayer.
 - A. In order to pray effectively, a believer should possess the necessary doctrine in the soul. Jn. 15:7
 - B. Wisdom in this regard enables the believer to know when to keep asking, quit asking, or simply wait. Matt. 7:7
 - C. The believer must be in fellowship to engage in effective prayer Jn. 15:7
 - 1. When you follow the appropriate protocol, the Holy Spirit delivers your prayer directly to the Father. Rom. 8:26
 - 2. Believers that are positive and possess Bible doctrine may have weaknesses at certain times in the area of prayer.
 - 3. Oftentimes the problem is being able to articulate accurately in a given situation.
 - 4. Lacking omniscience, we are not adequate at times to offer a prayer that covers all the issues in a situation.
 - 5. The Holy Spirit takes up the slack, perfects our prayer, and brings it to the Father.
 - D. Constancy. I Thess. 5:17
 - E. Persistence. Lk. 11:5-13, 18:1-8
 - F. Personal righteousness and unity. I Tim. 2:8
 - G. Orientation to one's time in history. I Pet. 4:7
 - H. Prayer should be private. Matt. 6:5-6, 14:23, 26:36f
 - I. Prayer should include all things. Phil. 4:6

- VI. Classifications of prayer.
 - A. Confession. Matt. 6:12; I Jn. 1:9
 - B. Intercession. Lk. 4:38; Eph. 6:18-19; I Thess. 5:25
 - C. Thanksgiving. Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:18
 - D. Praise. Ps. 30:4, 33:1; Heb. 13:15

- VII. The objects of prayer.
 - A. Wisdom, the single most important petition you can offer. James. 1:5; Prov. 2:3-5
 - B. Establishment chain of command. I Tim. 2:1-4
 - C. Royal chain of command. Rom. 15:30; II Thess. 3:1
 - D. Makarios Bible Church. Col. 1:3; Eph. 1:15-19; II Thess. 1:11
 - E. Living grace. Mat. 6:11
 - F. The maturity adjustment. II Cor. 13:9; Eph. 3:14-17; Col. 1:9-10, 4:12
 - G. The rapture, the resolution of the angelic conflict for the Church Age believer. Matt. 6:10; Lk. 21:34-36; Rev. 22:20
 - H. Believers under testing. Phil. 1:19; James 5:13,15

- I. All that pressures you. Phil. 4:6; IPet. 5:7
- J. Your enemies. Matt. 5:44; Lk. 23:34
- K. Other local churches that are faithful to Bible Doctrine. Eph. 1:15-16
- L. The success of Bible doctrine in history. Eph. 6:19; IIThess. 3:1

VIII. Hindrances to effective prayer.

- A. STA activity, failure to rebound. Ps. 66:18
- B. Wrong content, based on negative volition or ignorance. Prov. 28:9
- C. Negative volition, rejection of Bible Doctrine. Prov. 1:28-29
- D. Wrong intent. James 4:3
- E. Failure to ask. James. 4:2
- F. Failure to forgive. Matt. 6:14-15
- G. Lack of domestic harmony, an abuse of authority. IPet. 3:7
- H. Unbelief. Mk. 11:23-24; James 1:5-8
- I. Lack of diligence. Lk. 22:46
- J. Therefore, we see that prayers are often not answered due to a pattern of carnality, manifested by a failure to assemble consistently, unbelief, mental attitude sins, and failure to apply.

IX. The model prayer.

- A. Jesus set such an example in prayer that his disciples were prompted to request a lesson in prayer. Lk. 11:1-4
- B. The model prayer, like other doctrines, was taught on more than one occasion. Lk 11:1-4; Matt. 6:9-13
- C. This prayer is a model concerning content and does not possess some magic ability to get God's attention, nor is it to be repeated mindlessly.
- D. The prayer and its content.
 1. **Our Father**, emphasizes that family relationship between God and his children. The Aramaic term "**Abba**" is an affectionate form of address and means papa or daddy.
 2. **Who is in Heaven**, stresses the believer's orientation to God's majesty, transcendence and sovereignty.
 3. **Let your name be holy**, places emphasis on the essence of God, with special emphasis on God's righteousness, His total separation from all that is common or profane.
 4. **Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven**, a prayer for the Millennium and the ultimate resolution of the angelic conflict.
 5. **Give us this day our daily bread**, a request for living grace, stressing the fact that we are dependant on God for our life and well-being.
 6. **Forgive us our debts**, rebound.
 7. **As we have forgiven our debtors**, a necessary prerequisite for obtaining PH₂ forgiveness from God, stresses our humility and grace orientation.
 8. **Do not lead us into temptation**, a prayer that God will not allow circumstances into our niche that would cause us to crash and burn. This emphasizes our predilection for the indwelling STA and the fact that we could all become spiritual casualties.
 9. **Deliver us from evil**, deals with the fact that our unseen enemy, Satan, is ever active against us and would love for us to come into some temptation that would destroy us. Jn. 17:15

- X. Concluding observations.
- A. Prayer is both a privilege and a responsibility we possess due to our position in Christ. Eph. 1:3
 - B. Like any other discipline, it must be studied and mastered in order to be practiced effectively.
 - C. We are to possess perfect confidence in our relationship with the Father, based on the perfect work of the Son, and come to Him as any loving child comes to his father. Matt. 6:7-12; Heb. 4:16
 - D. We may freely commit anything and everything in our lives to Him in prayer. Phil. 4:6; IPet. 5:6-7
 - E. We are encouraged to bring our request to Him and patiently await His answer. Matt. 7:7
 - F. Our requests must be tempered by the doctrines of the Word of God; we are to pray in line with the revealed will of God. Jn. 14:13-14, 15:7,16
 - G. Success in prayer is directly proportional to success in the realm of intake and application of Bible doctrine. Jn. 15:7; IJn. 3:21-22

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. Col. 4:2