

Sunday, January 21, 2024

Communicating with God (2)

Prayer (2) – Access to God Granted

Last week we introduced our theme for 2024, “Communicating with God: A study of prayer and Bible study.” We began with an introduction to prayer. We noted in that lesson, that prayer is man’s side of the “2-way street” communicating with God. Simply defined, prayer is the way God has provided for us to communicate with Him. We established in that lesson that prayer is a significant topic and need in the life of the Christian. There are many reasons why we ought to pray regularly. First and foremost, it is commanded by God throughout scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:13, 16, etc.).

But it is equally important that we learn how to pray properly and effectively. That is what this study is about. Today, I want to begin with a few lessons about God and our prayers. There are several things to understand about God that are crucial to proper prayer. Today we begin by noting that we have been granted access to Him through this avenue.

I. Our need for access

- a. Prayer to God is about access to Him. This means that God has made available an avenue through which we can approach Him. But there is a problem that has to be addressed to give us access – our sins. Why? Because we cannot approach God in our sins. 1 John 1:5 tells us that God is light and in Him is no darkness. Habakkuk 1:13, *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?* Psalm 5:4, David noted, *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.* The holiness of God calls for this.
- b. When we sin, we have been alienated from God – Isaiah 59:1-2, *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*** James 4:4 – *friendship with the world is enmity against God.*
- c. Therefore, when we sin, we need to take care of those sins IF we are to gain access to God. Through Jesus we have that access.
 - i. Ephesians 2:17-18, through Him we both (Jews & Gentiles – TT) have access by one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 3:11-12 – through Christ we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.
 - ii. We have been reconciled through Him – Romans 5:10-11 notes that through His death, we have been reconciled. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 – God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus.
 - iii. Romans 3:23-26 – He is our propitiation – a word that means the wrath of God has been appeased. Hebrews 2:17 reminds us of the humanity (and suffering) of Jesus so that He could be our faithful High Priest and make propitiation for our sins.
 - iv. Jesus is our mediator – a mediator is one who stands between two parties. 1 Timothy 2:5-6, *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*
 - v. He intercedes for us – Hebrews 4:14-16 – He is our great High Priest. A study of the Levitical priesthood helps us to understand the writer is clearly declaring Jesus is a mediator. Hebrews 7:25, which continues to develop the priesthood of Jesus notes, *Therefore He is also*

able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Romans 8:34 tells us Jesus is seated in heaven at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

- vi. 1 John 2:1-2 notes that if we sin, *“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*
- vii. That is why, when we offer prayers, it MUST be with the understanding that it is THROUGH Him. John 14:6, Hebrews 7:25 again. Ephesians 5:20 notes that we give thanks to the Father *“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- viii. UNDERSTANDING this ought to give us an appreciation for the power of prayer, especially when it comes to our forgiveness and access to God.

II. **Our relationship with the father**

- a. Another consideration about God and prayer is to consider our relationship with Him. It is more than an informal and distant relationship. We are family. God is our heavenly Father, and we are His children. We have access to Him AS a child has access to his father. Consider the example of Hebrews 12:4-11. While dealing with discipline, the writer is clear about our relationship with our Father.
- b. We have received adoption as His children – again this is through Jesus. Ephesians 1:3-5 describes this. Also, Galatians 4:4-7 – we are treated as “sons” (and daughters). And again, Romans 8:15, *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”*
- c. How is that relationship established? Galatians 3:26-28. When we obey the gospel, we are added to His family.
- d. Incidentally, we are reminded of this when we pray. How did Jesus begin the model prayer, “Our Father in heaven...” Matthew 6:9ff.
- e. The point here is to consider as we pray to God, there OUGHT to be that understanding of relationship! Even familial relationship. The better we grasp that, the more effective (a word that means productive or functional) our prayers will be. We can approach Him with this relationship in mind – Hebrews 4:14-16 – again, relating to Jesus as our High Priest who understands and sympathizes, *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
- f. NOTE: While our God is our heavenly, spiritual father, we still MUST demonstrate due reverence. Do not approach Him as your “buddy” or “neighbor”. We serve Him, reverently and with godly fear (Hebrews 12:28-29).

III. **God’s grace and prayer**

- a. In our last point we noted Hebrews 4:16, *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of His grace.”* Prayer is HOW we approach His throne. Grace is what makes that approach possible. God has opened this “line of communication” to us. 1 Peter 3:12 tells us that His ears are open to the prayers of the righteous.
- b. 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us of God’s invitation to come to Him in prayer, *“casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you.”* This is a manifestation of His grace toward us.
- c. We have studied the subject of grace in dealing with drawing closer to God. Grace is the prime factor in our salvation. It is God’s part that makes it possible for us to do our part (faith, obedience). Ephesians 2:1-10 develops this. We were dead in our sins, without hope and children of wrath. BUT God, who is rich in mercy and great love made us alive together with Christ *“by grace you have been saved.”* (vs. 5). He raised us (from our deadness) *so that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us... While that says much, it would certainly include our access to Him.*

- d. When God listens to our prayers, He is showing His grace.
 - i. As He answers our prayers, He is gracious – Matthew 7:7-11 as Jesus emphasized our need to pray.
 - ii. HOW He answers our prayers shows His grace - 1 John 5:14-15, cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – “My grace is sufficient...”
 - iii. What He does for us manifests His grace - 1 John 1:7-9 – if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us.
 - iv. James 1:5 – as we ask for wisdom, He manifests His grace by giving us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). Of course, we must do our part. In a later lesson, we will address more of what we can pray for.
 - v. Romans 8:26 – the work of the Holy Spirit (and Jesus) in our prayers demonstrates the grace of God. This text reminds us that He intercedes for us too, ensuring that we “pray as we ought”.

And thus, we can see that God has done His part to make prayer a blessing and privilege for those who belong to Him. In our next lesson, we will examine some qualities of God associated with our prayers. Do you pray as you should? Think about it!