

Sunday, January 28, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (3)

God and prayer (2)

Understanding God as we pray

Today, we continue our study of prayer. We have introduced the importance of prayer. Last week we began addressing God and prayer by discussing access to God. We noted that God has granted us access through Jesus (who is our mediator, intercessor and advocate), He has adopted us as His children, and His grace is demonstrated as we pray. Today, we want to note some qualities of God associated with our prayers.

I. He knows what we need

- a. **There is nothing God does not know. God is Omniscient (all seeing or all aware).** Psalm 147:5, *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.*
 - i. Psalm 139:1-12 reminds us of this as David prays. He begins by acknowledging, vs. 1-4, *O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.*
 - ii. Hebrews 4:13, *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*
 - iii. Matthew 6:6-8, we can go to God “in secret” with the confidence that He hears us.
- b. **He knows everything even BEFORE IT occurs –**
 - i. Isaiah 48:3, challenging the foolishness of idolatry, we read, *“I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. Isaiah 46:9-10, Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’*
 - ii. Jeremiah 1:5, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*
 - iii. Psalm 139:13-16 finds David acknowledging this too, *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*
- c. **So why do we pray?**
 - i. Because He commands us to. We find this frequently – 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Luke 18:1, Philippians 4:6, etc.
 - ii. Because it gives us confidence as we approach Him. – 1 John 5:14-15. We may not fully grasp how God will answer our prayers, but the fact that He IS omniscient ought to give us confidence that He knows what is best and will answer us accordingly.

- iii. It also keeps our prayers “in check”– James 4:2-3, they asked and did not receive because their motives were corrupt and selfish. When we pray it must be with the realization that He knows our heart and our motives.
- iv. It gives us awareness of our needs. With confidence, we know that God can answer our prayers, BUT we also know that we have a part in it. God does not expect us to do nothing when we are able. In fact, we know that will lead to condemnation. Consider the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Again be reminded of Matthew 7:7-8 – after we ask, we seek & find, knock so that it will be opened. IOW, we are reminded to do our part! When I pray to God, it PREPARES me to receive His answer.
- v. It reminds us of who He is and who we are. Men who forget to pray, forget about God. Prayers consist of much more than just intercessions and supplications. We praise, thank and glorify God as we pray to Him.
- d. Understanding the omniscience of God should NOT cause us to dismiss prayer. ***Instead, it ought to move us to greater and deeper prayers.*** It ought to give us comfort and peace. Philippians 4:6-7. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much – James 5:16

II. He can answer us –

- a. He is able – not only is God all seeing, He is also omnipotent, which means He is all powerful.
 - i. Ephesians 3:20, *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*
 - ii. The expression, “to Him who is able...” is found 2x more in the NT, Romans 16:25 – He is able to establish you according to the gospel; AND Jude 24 – He is able to keep you from stumbling. These verses show the power of God to do whatever He needs to do.
- b. Nothing is too hard for Him
 - i. Jeremiah 32:16-17, *“Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying: ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. He proceeds to pray to God noting that the Chaldeans (Babylon) had conquered the people. As the LORD answered, He said, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me...” (Jeremiah 32:27)*
 - ii. Matthew 19:26 – remember the answer of Jesus about the rich entering heaven. With God all things are possible.
 - iii. Many of the historical events recorded in scripture are designed to help us understand and appreciate His power. Genesis 1:1-3 – He created the universe and said, “Let there be light and there was light”; He divided the Red Sea so that the Israelites could be finally delivered from the Egyptians (Exodus 14:13, 30); He brought Jesus into this world, allowed Him to be crucified and ultimately raised Him from the dead, etc. He has given us His word (logos) that is indestructible and powerful (Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:24-25) and can save mankind from himself and eternal destruction (Romans 1:16-17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, etc.).
- c. Thus, when we pray to God, we can do so with confidence that He CAN answer.
 - i. Again, we are reminded of 1 John 5:14-15 - We have the confidence that He hears us and will answer in the way that is best.
 - ii. James 5:13-18 – while never mentioning the power of God, it is necessarily implied throughout the text.

III. He is not far from us -

- a. Acts 17:27 finds Paul telling the Athenians, *“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;”*
- b. Isaiah 55:6-7 notes, *Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*
- c. 2 Corinthians 6:16, as Paul is challenging these brethren to not be unequally yoked with the world, he quotes, *As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”* This is taken from Exodus 29:45, Leviticus 26:12, Jeremiah 31:33, 32:38, etc. The idea of dwelling among us implies the presence of God.
- d. Of course, these verses are not saying that God is physically present, but His Spirit is everywhere. And the point is, you CANNOT hide from Him. He hears prayers everywhere – He is omnipresent. Be reminded of Psalm 139:7-12 – *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You. (7-12)*
- e. He cares about us – 1 Peter 5:7. Be reminded that we are His children (cf. Hebrews 12:5-12). And just as a parent is near their child, so He is near to us.
- f. We must have confidence that we can go God in prayer WHEREVER we are. An ungodly man may take away your freedom, but he CANNOT take you to someplace where God will not hear your sincere and righteous prayers.

These are a few of the qualities that, as we study the subject of prayer, are made manifest in our God. With these we can see that God is able and wants to answer our prayers in the way that is best. Hebrews 4:16, after reminding us of how Jesus is our High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (we pray to God through Him), we are reminded, *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

What about you? Do you appreciate who God is as you pray to Him? Think about it?