

The Problem of Prayer in the Age of Grace:

Jer 33.3

Mt. 7:7, 21:22

How do we give the “yes,no,later” answer with a straight face?

- we give conditions that are not there.

The Apostle Paul and Prayer:

- Paul interceded for other believers: Rom 1:9, Eph 1:16, Phil 1:9, Col 1:3, 9, 1 Thes 1:2, 2 Thes 1:11, Philem 4
 - Ephaphras – Col 4:12
- Paul taught that we don’t know how to pray, but that the Spirit intercedes: Rom 8:26
- Paul used the same word for *pray* as he did for *wish*. Rom 9:3, 2 Cor 13:7&9
- Paul instructed his followers to pray: Rom 12:12, Eph 6:18, Phil 4:6, Col 4:2, 1 Thes 5:17, 1 Tim 2:1, 1 Tim 2:8
- Paul asked others to pray for him: Rom 15:30, Col 4:3, 1 Thes 5:25, 2 Thes 3:1, Philem 22
- Paul talked about times of fasting and prayer: 1 Cor 7:5
- Paul talked about the need to pray under authority: 1 Cor 11:4-5, 13
- Paul taught that we should pray with understanding: 1 Cor 14:13-15
- Paul commended widows who pray day and night: 1 Tim 5:5
- Paul prays for the removal of the thorn – 2 cor 12:8-9

Note:

- Paul is a praying man and expects others to pray.
- There is not a single *instruction* about prayer, other than “do it.”
- There is not a single *promise* about prayer given by Paul

So:

- Do we get our *instruction* from other places in Scripture?
- Do we claim any *promise* from other places in Scripture?

Praying in the Age of Grace
Session 2

Last session:

- The application of prayer promises and the experience (and teaching) of the church do not align. (“Yes, no, maybe” doesn’t align with “whatsoever ye ask.”)
- Paul was a praying man and expects others to pray
- Paul doesn’t give a single instruction about prayer
- Paul doesn’t give a single promise about prayer.

This session:

1. If you claim that there are no real problems with prayer promises and the experience of believers today, you are the victim of foggy thinking. –and foggy thinking isn’t good for the church.
 - a. “Prayer is the only omnipotence God grants to us.”¹
 - b. “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer” (John Wesley).²
 - c. –Note, the same book of illustrations has a section on “unanswered prayer.”
2. It is possible to build a doctrine of prayer for the age of grace without doing harm to the Scripture. In fact, it is not only possible, it is essential.
3. Unanswered prayer in the Epistles of Paul – enough to say, “dispensationally something changed.”
 - a. 1 Cor 11:30 (vs James 5:14-15)
 - b. Phil 2:25-28 ??
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:20 – compare Acts 19:11-12
 - d. 2 Cor. 12:8-10
4. Does prayer in the OT prove that prayer is always the same in any dispensation?
 - a. The first 10 prayers of the OT:
 - i. First prayer in the Bible – Gen 20:7, 17 Abraham the prophet
 - ii. Second prayer in the Bible – Exodus 11:2 Moses the prophet
 - iii. Third prayer in the Bible – Numbers 21:7 – people ask Moses to pray
 - iv. Fourth prayer in the Bible – Dt. 9:20-26 (chronologically the third)
 - v. Fifth prayer in the Bible – 1 Sam 1:10ff –first prayer of a layman.
 - vi. Sixth prayer in the Bible – 1 Sam 7:5 – by Samuel on behalf of the people
 - vii. Seventh prayer in the Bible – 1 Sam 8:6
 - viii. Eighth prayer in the Bible – 1 Sam 12:19-23
 - ix. Ninth prayer in the Bible - 2 Sam 7:27-29

1. ¹ Green, Michael P., ed. *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 Sermon Illustrations Arranged by Topic and Indexed Exhaustively*. Revised edition of: The expositor’s illustration file. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989. Print.

² Ibid

- x. Tenth prayer in the Bible – 1 Kings 8:28ff (dedication of the temple by Solomon)
- xi. Other prayers –
 1. Hezekiah
 2. Isaiah
 3. Manasseh
 4. Ezra
 5. Nehemiah
 6. Job
 7. Daniel
 8. Jonah
- b. The first instruction about prayer – 2 Chron 7:14 (and this is arguably the only command in the OT to pray).
- c. Summary: If prayer was a major part of Old Testament life, it is left out of the text. Therefore, one can conclude that *prayer changes with the dispensations*.
 - i. Innocence: Adam talked with God
 - ii. Conscience: No mention of prayer, but God spoke to Cain. (Exception: Job)
 - iii. Government: No mention of prayer
 - iv. Promise: Abraham prayed
 - v. Law:
 1. prayer by prophets, priests, and kings.
 2. Prayer by laymen- Hannah
 3. Prayer instructed – 1 Chron.
 4. NO PROMISES OF PRAYER WHATSOEVER.
 - vi. Mini-dispensation of the Kingdom offer (Apostolic Age) is the only exception.
 - vii. Grace: appears to be the same as Law
- d. Conclusion: we are basing our prayer doctrines on promises for the Kingdom, when we don't live in the Kingdom.

Session 3: what evangelicals have made of prayer.

Session 4: what we can and should expect of prayer.

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