

January 16, 2022 – The doctrine of prayer

Prayer in the Old Testament:

“Whatever criteria one uses to define prayer (as inherently a human activity), it is essentially shaped by the confession about the sovereign and personal, almighty and accessible God, who is both the source and the sustenance of prayer.” – P.A. Verhoef

The language of prayer:

*Pll* – often taken as intercessory or petitionary.

Intercessory examples are of Abraham who prayed for Abimelech (Gen. 20:7), Moses for the people (Num. 21:7), Samuel for Israel (I Sam. 7:5). In petitionary contexts, the Scripture emphasizes the prayer is directed toward, or in the presence of the Lord.

Petitionary examples are Hannah for a child (I Sam. 1:26), David for fulfillment of God’s covenant (II Sam. 7:27), Solomon for prayers to be heard (I Kgs. 8:30, 35, 42, 44).

*Tpll* – petitionary, with a strong intercessory plea (more passionate than *pll*).

It is used as a cry for mercy ( I Kings 8:28), and for help (Psalm 39:12).

It is commonly employed with activity:

Lifting hands – Psalm 141:2

Speaking audibly – Psalm 54:2

Facing the Lord – Daniel 9:3

“The basic assumption in all prayers is that God responds to them.” - Verhoef

The doctrine of prayer:

There is agony in unanswered prayer – Ps. 35:13

There is agony in prayer being blocked – Lam. 3:5

There is agony in God shrouding Himself to be inaccessible – Lam. 3:44

There is agony in God’s anger as turned against His praying people – Ps. 80:4

An ultimate stroke of judgment is God’s ignoring of prayer – Ezek. 9:8

An ultimate stroke of judgment is God’s promise to not hear prayer – Jer. 7:16

The time, place, and postures of prayer:

*Place* – Prayer could be done anywhere (Gen. 24:26-27). Locations were designated as locations of prayer (EG Shiloh in I Sam. 1; Hebron II Sam. 15:7; The temple, Is. 56:7). Private prayers may be made at home (Dan. 6:11).

*Time* - There is no specific time for prayer, however there are times commonly convenient or designated (EG feasts, I Sam. 1; evenings, Ps. 4; sacrifices Ez. 9:5; mornings, Ps. 5).

*Posture* – While no specific posture is prescribed, kneeling (I Kgs. 8:54), bowing (Gen. 47:31), standing and/or sitting (I Sam. 1:26) are patterned.

## The theology of prayers:

Genesis 4:26b – “then began men to call upon the name of the LORD”

The phrase emphasizes the activity of prayer but seems to clearly indicate a heart of worship.

Genesis 18:16-33 – Abraham’s intercession

This prayer for the preservation of Sodom is selfless but imploring.

How does Abraham see God? How can you tell?

How does Abraham see himself? How can you tell?

Abraham asks God with an expectation that he is being heard, and that God will respond.

Numbers 14:13-19 – Moses’ intercession

This prayer for the preservation of Israel is also selfless but imploring.

How does Moses see God? How can you tell?

How does Moses see Israel? How can you tell?

Moses makes an appeal to God based on his own theology, and while God honored his request to preserve Israel’s life, there was still judgement to be dispensed.

I Samuel 2:1-10 – Hannah’s praise

The heart of Hannah overflows with adoration for God who blessed her.

How does Hanna see God? How can you tell?

How does Hanna see mankind? How can you tell?

Hannah has great reason for praising the Lord. It is in times of great blessing that we laud our God.

Psalms 51 – David’s confession and repentance

The sin of David has been clearly presented to his own shame. His response is to humbly repent and confess.

How does David see God? How can you tell?

How does David see himself? How can you tell?

David was a man who exhibited the traits of the godly, not in his sin, but in how he responded to it.