

THE NATURE OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Our aim over next few weeks is to learn how to pray, looked at reasons for learning to pray last week.

Prayer is correspondence with heaven. But, what should we be corresponding with heaven about?

⇒ Eavesdropping - what would you expect to hear being discussed? - content defines relationship.

What is nature of prayer? What are the subjects, parts that the Bible expects to make up our communication with heaven? Being clear on 'parts of prayer' is vital if we going to pray effectively.

1. INVOCATION

Invocation = calling upon God. Opening up channels of communication. This may include:

- i) Mention of one or more of the names or titles of God. e.g. Matt 6:9, Daniel 9:4, Nem 1:5
- ii) A declaration of our desire to worship him. We come to give him praise, recognising our own unworthiness. Nem 1:5, Daniel 9:4.
- iii) A desire of his assistance. Nem 1:6. We must not become formulaic, but it is normal for our prayers to begin with a proper recognition that we speaking to God.

2. ADORATION

Adoration = praising God for what he is - Psalm 29:1-2. Immediately see that there is overlap between invocation & adoration - and one statement maybe both - Matt 6:9. Within our prayer life we should be adoring God for who he is & what he is like. This means speaking about his nature & attributes.

- i) nature: Speaking of his properties & perfection's - that he is: (exp each) self-sufficient, unity of his being, he is only God, he is a Trinity, he is set-apart from all other creatures, his surpassing greatness.
- ii) attributes: grace, power, justice, wisdom, sovereignty, holiness, goodness, mercy, love. Psalm 103:7

3. PRAISE

Praise = praising God for what he has done - Psalm 103:2. Watts includes this as part of adoration - certainly very closely related, but it is helpful to separate them or else we can become selfish in our praise - only praising God because of benefit we have received, but when we come to pray to God we must worship him because in his own right he is worthy of our adoration & praise. This note of adoration should continue as we praise him for all that he has done (exp each): creation, providence, redemption. By his work God shows forth his glory - Luke 1:46f. A great God who does great things.

4. CONFESSION

Confession = recognition of my own guilt - Psalm 51:3-5. Confession is a necessary part of our praying because we are sinners - we have offended God who we are accountable to, and we must therefore, acknowledge our sinfulness & our sins before God, asking that he would be pleased to forgive us. This should always be apart of our praying: Matt 6:12, Luke 11:4, 1 John 1:9. Sometimes it will be necessary for this to form a greater part of our praying - when we become aware of particular faults & follies that maybe doing great harm to us, others & cause of God. Whenever we come in

confession, also come with confidence of cleansing: 1 John 1:9. We are a forgiven people.

5. SUPPLICATION

Supplication = praying as a needy sinner - Luke 18:13. Very closely related to confession, but also includes an active request to God for forgiveness & recognition that only God can grant it. We want to be delivered from all kinds of evil - temporary, spiritual & eternal. We want saving in fullest sense.

6. PETITION

Petition = praying as a dependent sinner - Matt 6:11. Again some overlap with supplication (Watts includes it here) - but this is a more general expression of our dependence upon God. All true prayer is petition, because the moment we pray we acknowledge our need, and so this aspect of prayer should be noticeable throughout our prayers. This is asking dimension of prayer. God wants us to put our needs before him & make requests of him - temporal, spiritual & eternal. We ask him to supply our food to eat. We ask him to increase our knowledge of him that we might grow. We ask for the consolation of his Spirit that we would be helped through all ups & downs of life.

7. INTERCESSION

Intercession = praying for the needs of others - Gen 18:20f. We are not only ones dependent upon God. We are to petition God on behalf of others as well. We are to pray for other believers (Eph 6:18), for all men (1 Tim 2:1) for those in authority (1 Tim 2:2). Particular concern is extension of God's kingdom - the success of gospel across world - hence 'Your kingdom come' & concerns of 1 Tim 2:1f Paul regularly writes in his letters that he is praying for believers & churches: Eph 1:16f, Phil 1:3f, Col 1:3f, 1 Thess 1:2 - these also provide great instruction on what we should pray for other Christians Not only does Paul speak of his prayers for others, but wants others to pray for him: 1 Thess 5:25.

8. PLEADING

This is not necessarily a separate part of prayer - but it belongs with petition & intercession. Pleading with God is when we come and argue our case with God in a humble yet fervent manner. Many examples in Bible of pleading prayer. Abraham: Gen 18:20f, Jeremiah: Jer 12:1, Moses: Ex 32:7-14. Various basis on which we can plead: greatness of our needs, perfection's of God's nature, promises of God, name & honour of God in world, relationship we now enjoy as children, his previous works. Most powerful & prevailing argument is name & mediation of Jesus Christ: Jn 16:23. "in Jesus name."

9. THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving = praising God for answered prayer - Luke 17:11-19. Not just answered prayer, many other blessings he has given us without us asking. Should always be a note of thanksgiving: Phil 4:6.

10. AMEN

Conclusion. Word means: surely, certainly. It is acknowledgement what said is true, desire for God to answer, oath binding ourselves to God with hope & expectation that he will hear & answer our prayers
CONCLUSION: Our prayers should have a suitable blend of all these parts. Does it?