

THE REWARD OF PRAYER

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” —MATTHEW 6:6

We usually place value on prayers being answered, but in the above verse, Jesus places value on prayers being rewarded. What is the nature of the reward Jesus is talking about?

There are three significant ways in which prayer is rewarded. The first is that it brings us into an intimate communion with God. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He began with, “Our Father in heaven...” This is the first time in the Bible that God is ever addressed as ‘Father’ in a personal way. God is called ‘Father’ in the Old Testament in a metaphorical sense, and as the Father of creation, but in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks 17 times of God as Father in an intimate way. This was radically new to the Jewish people as no one ever addressed God as their Father. But when Christ becomes our Saviour, God becomes our Father in that we become united with Christ, and share in His sonship with all the privileges a child has with their father.

The second reward is that prayer brings us into alignment with God. The communion with God in the first two clauses - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”, leads to alignment with God in the second two clauses - “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth...” This is not about a middle road between our will and God’s

will, but about being totally aligned with the will and purposes of God. Our communion and alignment with God are intricately connected, because we will not know God's will if we are not in communion with Him. In coming to know God, we can confidently pray for God's will to be done, whatever the issue, because He is sufficient for any situation, and we know we can trust Him.

The third reward prayer brings is provision from God. There are three personal requests: "Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." This presents our physical, moral and spiritual needs. Physically, God provides today what we need for today. Morally, though we cannot put every relationship right because it takes two people, we can be forgiving as God is forgiving. Spiritually, the closer we come to God, the more we can be sure Satan will try to lure us away, and without God's protection, we are no match for Satan.

Intimate communion with God, alignment with God, and provision from God are received from Him, not as an answer, but as a reward. The answers are secondary to the value of our prayers.

PRAYER: Precious Lord, thank you for hearing me. Thank You for knowing my heart, and for your patience and love. I treasure my prayer time with You.

TO REFLECT UPON: Does my prayer bring me into a deeper relationship with God?