Jake Fabish

SESSION 4 | PRAYER

"Prayer is our response to God… the breathing of the soul…prayer is a person talking to God" –Matthew Bingham

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Bingham - "Approaches to Prayer - 3 considerations"

1. Prayer must be thoughtful
2. Prayer must be tightly tethered to Scripture
3. Prayer must be heartfelt

B. Bible Promises

1. Invited by God - (Ps. 145:18 / Matt. 7:7)
2. We are commanded to "be anxious about nothing/pray about everything" (Ph 4:6)
3. God hears (1 Jn 5:14)
4. We never pray alone (Jn 14:26 / Rom 8:26 & 24)

II. DIFFICULTIES WITH PRAYER

A. *"Prayer…comprising meditation, supplication, praise, and thanksgiving, is one of the most signal duties of religion… without it there neither is nor can be the exercise of any religion in the world…This is the way whereby we exercise towards Him all that grace which we do receive from Him…But we need not insist on the commendation of prayer, for it will be said, "By whom was it ever*

discommended?" And I wish I saw reason to acquiesce in that reply; for not only the practice of most, but the declared opinions of many, ***do evidence that neither the excellency of this duty nor its necessity doth find such acceptance and esteem in the minds of men as is pretended.****"* (John Owen)

B. *"Supposing we had awakened today to find everything concerning the Holy Spirit and prayer removed from the Bible - that is, not in the way that the liberals would remove it, but that God had somehow really removed everything about prayer and the Holy Spirit from the Bible. What difference would it make practically between the way we worked yesterday and the way we would work today, and tomorrow?"* (La'Bri, Shaeffer)

C. Experiences that "fray"...

1. Suffering
2. Misconceptions around prayer
3. Sin
    a) Selfishness
    b) Pride
    c) Self-reliance
    d) Impatience

D. *"There are Christians, who really almost envy the answers to prayer that they hear about, but they want specific answers to some specific requests without the rest of their lives being changed in any way… many Christians want the excitement of a reply from God, but not the pain of the struggle."*

(La'Bri, Shaeffer)

III. WHAT IS PRAYER

A. Defining prayer biblically - prayer is not a vending machine or a tool

1. "For prayer absolutely and formally is not a peculiar grace distinct from all other graces that one exercised in it, but it is the way and the manner by which we exercise all other graces." - John Owen / *"..having done all, to stand firm… praying at <u>all times</u> in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."* (Eph. 6: 13 & 18)

B. Recapturing the "wonder" of prayer - "Prayer is a person talking to God" (Bingham)

C. Recapturing the excitement of Biblically expectant prayer

1. *"..our Lord repeatedly and forcefully teaches that it is in and through our prayers that we receive good gifts from our Father in heaven. As Calvin put it, "Nothing is promised to be expected from the Lord, which we are not also bidden to ask of Him in prayers." As a result, Christians must 'dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon'"* (Bingham, pg 169)

D. Tethering our prayers to Scripture

1. *"When we talk to God in prayer, we come with an awareness that it is His word that **initiates** the conversation and makes it possible in the first place."* (Bingham, pg. 185)
2. *"... for whoever would draw near to God **must** believe that <u>He exists</u> and that <u>He rewards</u> those who seek Him." (Heb. 11:6) / "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with*

whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:17) /

"Remember this, if there were any better place for you than the one you are in Divine Providence would have placed you there." (Spurgeon)

IV. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. Breathing out - Meditation is not emptying your mind but filling it with scripture. So also prayer is not "emptying" but asking to be filled and "tuning" your heart to His through His word. And then responding to Him - that's prayer.

1. "*What is praying? Prayer is the breathing of the soul.*" - Thomas Blake
2. "*Reading the Bible is inhaling. And praying is exhaling. Breathe in; breathe out. We take in the life giving words of God, and we breathe them back out to God in prayer.*" - Dane Ortland

B. Expectation - "tethering" is not diminishing. Tethering is expansion.

C. Pray always. . .

1. When you are weak (2 Cor. 12:9)
2. When you sin (1 John 1:9 - 2:1)
3. When you are lost/confused about what to do (James 1:5)
4. When you have needs (Phil. 4:6 / Matt 7:7)
5. When you are anxious and need peace (Phil. 4:6-7)
6. When you aren't sure what to pray (Rom 8:26/ John 14:16-17)
7. When you feel alone, broken, crushed (Psalm 34:18)
8. When you are tempted to despair (Duet. 31:6 / Heb. 4:16)
9. When you are tempted to sin (1 Cor. 10:13 / Heb. 4:15)

10. When you are thankful (Ps. 57:1 / Col. 4:2)

D. Resources

1. Books on Prayer - (Praying with Paul / Take these words with you)
2. Biographies - (Shaffer / Mueller)
3. Books of Prayers - (Valley of Vision)

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