

## PRAYER

(Adapted from Homer Hailey's 1990 book, *Prayer and Providence*)

Whether we pray to God, or to ancestors, or to a totem pole, humans pray! No doubt this demonstrates what an ancient philosopher once said, "Humans are incurably religious!" Do you pray, perhaps even unconsciously?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock.

When tragedy strikes we may blurt out, "Oh, God!" Is that just a learned response, or is it a natural, an innate heartfelt emotion? When something happens that brings us sudden joy, do we say under our breath, "Thank God!" Perhaps this is what that philosopher was describing when he said, "Humans are incurably religious!"

Prayer usually happens in a sobering moment. Indeed, prayer is sobering! By the means of prayer, a human being is permitted to talk to Deity. The finite is talking to the infinite! The dependent person is talking to the sustainer of the universe. The praying person is standing, or bowing, in the presence of the Lord of heaven and earth. A person seeks God's hearing, and God's fellowship. We believe we are permitted to cast our cares upon the Almighty, believing that the Almighty cares about humans. Indeed, God has revealed that He cares and hears. Yes, prayer requires a sobering moment.

On the other hand, if we think that prayer is a magic wand, by which we can order God around, then we are in for a rude awakening! This attitude is arrogance, not soberness. Humans do not have God on a rope! We cannot yank God this way or that! God does not have a horse's bit in His mouth!

Instead, the Almighty God **permits** human beings the **privilege** of prayer. In fact, God invites us into His presence to make our case. God's book, the Bible, reveals the Creator's thoughts and His rules for entry into His presence.

But **WHY** do humans feel the need to pray? It is because humans are needy! That's right! We humans live in a vast universe. We are frail. We are little. We are needy in three areas. **First**, we need to be in touch with the spirit, we need **spiritual things** because we are spiritual beings, just like God. The Bible says we are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26, 27), and we certainly understand that is not talking about flesh and blood! Furthermore, we are informed that "**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**" (John 4:24

**ESV)** There are spiritual understandings (Colossians 1:9). There are spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5). There are spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3), and there are spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). There is also spiritual wickedness against which humans **MUST** wrestle! (Ephesians 6:12) Yes, Humans need help with "spiritual things"! And so, we pray!

**Secondly**, humans need **moral direction** because we are moral beings who choose between choices, whether good or bad. Jeremiah, God's prophet, expressed our moral need in his prayer, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man does not *belong* to man; *it is* not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O LORD, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing."

**(Jeremiah 10:23, 24 MKJV)** A psalm of Israel says, "The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he (the man) delights in [the Lord's] way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand." **(Psalms 37:23-24 ESV)** And the ancient proverb reads, "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." **(Proverbs 16:9 ESV)** "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of [Jehovah] that will stand." **(Proverbs 19:21 ESV)** Yes indeed, because we make moral decisions, humans need **moral direction** and so we pray.

**Thirdly**, we humans need physical things because we are fleshly beings. Jesus expressed this need when teaching His disciples to ask: "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11) Furthermore Jesus instructed the disciples when he sent them out to preach: "**Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts-- no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.**" **(Matthew 10:9-10 NIV)** In other words, Jesus expected God to provide the people who would take care of the physical needs of His workers.

I am reminded of what Jesus' apostle Paul said when he received gifts from his dear Christian friends in Philippi. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ----I

have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen." [\(Philippians 4:10-20 ESV\)](#) Yes, we humans need physical things, and so we pray.

We humans are needy! We pray for **spiritual strength** for our relationship with God, we pray for **moral strength** for our decisions, and we pray for **physical strength** for our physical circumstances.

Another reason **WHY** humans pray is because we believe that the Almighty God is **a person who cares**. We believe we are talking to an intelligent, concerned, knowledgeable and powerful Creator. We believe this Almighty God must have the ability to hear every person in His universe, even though we cannot begin to comprehend how He does it! And we believe this Almighty God cares about each person's spiritual life, each person's morality, and each person's physical well-being. We believe He cares!

The Bible also reveals that this eternal Almighty God wishes to give to each one of His children an eternal inheritance of life. God believes that every one of Adam's descendants should receive what He offered to Adam! God gave Adam access to the tree of Life! However, Adam chose poorly! He chose to decide for himself good and evil. Taking upon himself Satan's arrogance, Adam chose to know good and evil for Himself. You and I are now stuck in Adam's decision. We too must wrestle between good and evil. Good is on one shoulder; evil is on the other shoulder and they are talking into our ears at the same time! We wrestle against rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers who rule over the darkness, the sin in this world. These are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [\(Ephesians 6:12\)](#)

Yes, Satan's arrogance has infiltrated human beings, but our Creator gives us an opportunity to be forgiven of our arrogance and sin. That's right! We can shed the arrogance of Satan and humble ourselves before the God of Heaven and Earth. And because of what Jesus did for us, God can forgive us! Jesus' apostle Peter put it this way: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time

he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. "(1 Peter 5:5-7 ESV)

By our humility God believes that we humans can fit into His eternal purposes and plans. Doing God's will was foremost in Jesus' mind. Even as a 12 year old boy, Jesus said to his parents, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49 ESV) Much later Jesus made this statement, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:43 ESV) Jesus told his followers: "Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, **your will be done**, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9-10 ESV) Jesus also said, "Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:35 ESV) Friends, when we desire and do the WILL of God, then we will be in closest kinship with Jesus Christ!

Jesus' apostle Paul begged Christians who had been forgiven of sin, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is **the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2 ESV) The apostle John wrote this, "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17 ESV)

Friends, we should all become aware that Almighty God has a WILL and a PURPOSE for humans in this world! Therefore, when humans pray we should attempt to ask according to the will of God. That assumes that God has revealed HIS WILL, that we can know His will! And He has, neighbor. God has revealed His will in His Word, the Bible. Therefore, we should pray according to what God has revealed. We should never pray for things without considering God's will!

James tells about some people who ask God for things for themselves! James wrote, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your [own] passions." (James 4:3 ESV) Since Jesus did God's will, even going to the cross for the sins of the world, humans are also urged to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Peter put it this way: "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing

what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

(1 Peter 4:1-5 ESV)

Yes, friends, by prayer we should come into the presence of God so we can pursue His will. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

Friends, visit a church of Christ where you can learn the Will of the ONE to whom you pray. You will learn His plan of salvation. You will then be better equipped to enter the presence of God in prayer. Furthermore, by obeying God, you will receive the eternal inheritance of life that God has prepared for them that love Him!