Doctrine of Prayer

The Various Facets of Prayer

1. Prayer is communion with the wonderful and mighty God of the universe.

2. Because God is personal, all people can offer prayers. Psa 65:2 “O thou that hearest prayers, unto thee shall all flesh come.” God heard the prayers of Gentiles and Jews in the Old Testament.
   - He heard the prayer of Enoch as they walked together.
   - He listened to the requests of Abraham as one Friend to another.
   - God listened to Elijah pray for the life of a widow’s son.
   - He heard Daniel’s prayer in Babylon.
   - The Lord honored the prayer of the woman of Canaan.
   - He heard Cornelius, the Italian centurion.

3. However, those who remain in unbelief and who have not trusted Jesus Christ remain alienated from God. They have not yet met the basis for a rewarding fellowship with God and prayer.

4. In contrast Christians do have a basis for prayer. They know something about the love of God which is revealed in a variety of different ways.
   - The incarnation
   - The life of Christ
   - The work of redemption at Calvary
   - The resurrection
   - The gift of the Holy Spirit

5. Based on love’s response to Divine favor Christians seek to pray—provided the heart is not jaded by sin.

6. There are several facets to prayer.
   - Faith. The most meaningful prayer comes from a heart that places its trust in the living God and believes that the God who is there speaks.
     - God has spoken through an audible voice.
     - God has spoken through visions.
     - God has spoken through the prophets.
     - God has spoken through the apostles.
     - God continues to speak through the Word.
- Worship. In worship there is recognition of the highest worth of Someone, God. Guided by Scriptures we set our thoughts and hearts towards the God around whom angels circle crying “Holy! Holy! Holy!” (Isaiah 6:3).

- Confession. An acute awareness of God’s holiness leads to a deep consciousness of one’s own sinfulness as the prophet Isaiah discovered. Bowing low before God the prophet cried out “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of host” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah “saw” the pure essence of God and was subdued by the revelation of the beauty of holiness.

- Adoration. People sometimes find it hard to express tender emotions. Nevertheless, when God fills our lives we will want to express our love in prayer and say “God, I love you.”

- Praise. The natural outgrowth of faith, worship, confession, and adoration is praise. We praise someone when we speak well of them. David praised the Lord for His mighty acts and His righteous judgments. We can praise God for Himself, His works, and His words.

  Psalms 150:2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

  Psalms 119:164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

- Thanksgiving. Having no claim upon God’s mercy or grace the believer has much to be grateful (Col 3:17; 1 Thess 5:18) for including:
  - Salvation
  - Eternal life
  - The Holy Spirit
  - The hope of Heaven
  - The hope of the resurrection

- Requests. Prayer is not only the heart’s response to grace but the means by which God responds to our needs though care must be taken to make a distinction between needs and greed.

7. Of course not all prayers are answered and for good reasons. In fact there are some hindrances to prayer.

  - Iniquity in the heart Psalm 66:18
  - Refusal to hear God’s law Proverbs 28:9
  - A dichotomy between the lips and heart Isaiah 29:13
  - Willful sin Isaiah 59:2
  - Praying to be seen of men Matthew 6:5-6
  - Offering unworthy sacrifices Malachi 1:7-9 (false testimonies)
8. On a positive side God does promise to answer our prayers

- when we help the helpless Isaiah 58:9,10
- when we have faith Mark 11:22-24
- when we forgive others Mark 11:25,26
- when we ask in the name of Jesus John 14:13,14
- when we pray in the Spirit Ephesians 6:8
- when we pray according to His will John 5:14,15

9. Although many people do not see the value of prayer, the Bible teaches that those who pray will receive many rewards.

- Freedom from fear Psalm 118:5,6
- Strength for the soul Psalm 118:3
- Divine guidance Isaiah 58:9-11
- Wisdom and understanding Daniel 9:20-27
- Deliverance from harm Joel 2:32
- Spiritual rewards Matt 6:6
- Good gifts Luke 11:13
- Joy John 16:23,24
- Inner peace Philippians 4:6-8
- Freedom from worry 1 Peter 5:7