

## **Praying the Promises of God**

### **I. Discerning the Will of God for Prayer**

#### **A. Last Week: Promises of God About Prayer Itself**

We saw that God has promised to answer ANYONE who prays, giving ANYTHING they ask for (when they ask in His name, according to His will, etc.)

***Matthew 7:7-8 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.***

***Matthew 21:22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.***

***1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.***

#### **B. Purpose of Prayer: NOT to Change God's Mind!!**

God's sovereign plan has already worked out all the details:

***Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will***

***Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.***

***Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.***

***Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.***

***Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.***

***Psalms 33:10-11 The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. <sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.***

***Isaiah 14:24 The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.***

***Isaiah 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.***

In prayer, we are not bringing to God any insight or purpose or idea or plan that He has not already completely considered and weighed out and understood and either ACCEPTED or REJECTED

***Romans 11:34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"***

Since we have such a limited perspective and wisdom, it is foolishness for us to go to God in prayer to teach Him anything

Actually the Bible makes it clear that, without help from God, we don't know what to pray for:

***Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.***

#### C. Two Key Questions, Then...

1. Why should we pray at all, if God is going to accomplish His purposes anyway?
2. Since we don't want to ask anything outside of His will, how can we pray more accurately the plans of God back to Him?

#### D. And Some Answers to them...

1. First question (why pray at all?...)
  - a. Because God ordains not only the ends (ultimate purposes) but also the means to the ends. And God has ordained that prayer will be effective to bring about the plans of God. God makes His plans, in some cases, dependent on human action... including prayer.
  - b. We pray to kindle our OWN hearts to LOVE the work of God, the will of God, the purposes and plans of God... when we fervently pray for someone to come to Christ, and that person does come to Christ, our joy and involvement is far greater than if we didn't
  - c. We pray to grow in our own sanctification, that we would love God and love people more; sin is essentially self-centeredness and pride; prayer destroys pride

d. We pray to build our relationship with God

## 2. Second question (how to discern God's will so we can pray effectively)

the answer is clear: READ THE WORD OF GOD and find out what He's doing in the world

One of the best ways to pray accurately in the will of God is to pray the PROMISES of God

Obviously, if God has promised to do something, then that thing is in the will of God. To pray for God to keep His promises then is worthwhile and fruitful.

[Another way is to pray the commands of God! Clearly if God commands us to understand/believe/be/do something, we can pray that we would understand/believe/be/do that thing, and we will be praying in God's will! Augustine uncovered this one in his *Confessions*

**My whole hope is in your exceeding great mercy and that alone. Give what you command and command what you will. You command chastity from us, and when I knew, as it is said, that no one could be chaste unless God gave it to him, even this was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was... Give what you command, and command what you will. [Confessions 10.29]**

Praying the commands and promises of God is a sure way to pray the will of God!

## II. Praying the Promises of God

***Hebrews 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.***

***Hebrews 10:22-23 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.***

***2 Peter 1:3-5 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge...***

### A. Key Quotes on the Promises

Thomas Manton: “One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, show Him His handwriting: God is tender of His Word.”

Christopher Nesse: “When God hath not a mouth to speak, men must not have a tongue to ask.”

William Gurnall: “Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer.... The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer.”

## B. Example from Church History: George Mueller

1. Started orphanages that cared for over 10,000 orphans in his lifetime
2. Three central reasons for starting them

*“The three chief reasons for establishing an Orphan-House are: 1. That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain thing to trust in Him; and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened. 2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children. 3. Their temporal welfare”*

3. John Piper’s comments about this:

Make no mistake about it: the order of those three goals is intentional. He makes that explicit over and over in his Narrative. *The orphan houses exist to display that God can be trusted and to encourage believers to take him at his word.* This was a deep sense of calling with Mueller. He said that God had given him the mercy in “being able to take God by His word and to rely upon it.” He was grieved that “so many believers . . . were harassed and distressed in mind, or brought guilt on their consciences, on account of not trusting in the Lord.” This grace that he had to trust God’s promises, and this grief that so many believers didn’t trust his promises, shaped Mueller’s entire life. This was his supreme passion: *to display with open proofs that God could be trusted with the practical affairs of life.* This was the higher aim of building the orphan houses and supporting them by asking God, not people, for money.

Mueller wrote: *It seemed to me best done, by the establishing of an Orphan-House. It needed to be something which could be seen, even by the natural eye. Now, if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained, without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House: there would be something which, with the Lord’s blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God. This, then, was the primary reason, for establishing the Orphan-House. . . The first and primary object of the work was, (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact, that the orphans under my care are provided, with all they need, only by prayer and faith, without any one being asked by me or my fellow-laborers, whereby it may be seen, that God is FAITHFUL STILL, and HEARS PRAYER STILL*

4. Mueller's careful insights about faith in the promises of God: the distinction between the "gift of faith" (1 Corinthians 12:9), and the "grace of faith":

*The difference between the gift and the grace of faith seems to me this. According to the gift of faith I am able to do a thing, or believe that a thing will come to pass, the not doing of which, or the not believing of which would not be sin; according to the grace of faith I am able to do a thing, or believe that a thing will come to pass, respecting which I have the word of God as the ground to rest upon, and, therefore, the not doing it, or the not believing it would be sin. For instance, the gift of faith would be needed, to believe that a sick person should be restored again though there is no human probability: for there is no promise to that effect; the grace of faith is needed to believe that the Lord will give me the necessities of life, if I first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness: for there is a promise to that effect (Matthew 6:33)*

5. Bottom line: it all comes down to praying in faith based on the promises of God

### C. Key Examples from Scripture

#### 1. David

**2 Samuel 7:25-28** *"And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, <sup>26</sup> so that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you. <sup>27</sup> 'O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, 'I will build a house for you.' So your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer. <sup>28</sup> O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.*

#### 2. Psalmists

**Psalm 119:38** *Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared.*

**Psalm 119:58** *I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.*

**Psalm 119:154** *Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise.*

#### 3. Isaiah and the "watchmen"

**Isaiah 62:6-7** *I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, <sup>7</sup> and*

***give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.***

This verse from Isaiah is not exactly a promise from God, but in the context of Isaiah 62 it is praying based on a promise; God has revealed that He will reestablish Jerusalem and make her glorious again (See Isaiah 60). Thus persistence based on the promised glory of Jerusalem is key.

#### 4. Daniel

- a. The backdrop: God's promise to restore Israel after seventy years

***Jeremiah 29:10-14 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity.***

- b. Daniel's corresponding prayer for God to do just that

***Daniel 9:2-4 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. <sup>3</sup> So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup> I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands...***

***Daniel 9:17-18 "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. <sup>18</sup> Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.***

#### 5. Nehemiah

***Nehemiah 1:4-9 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup> "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you***

*among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

#### 6. Jesus Christ

*John 17:1-5 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup> For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

*John 17:11 Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one.*

*John 17:23 May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

*John 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

#### 7. The Apostle Paul

*2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

#### 8. The Apostle John

*Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

#### 9. The writer of Hebrews

*Hebrews 13:5-6 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

Though not a prayer per se, it easily translates to one... God, money is a little tight right now; you have promised that you will not forsake us ever; help us be content

### III. Specific Promises of God Conducive to Prayer

#### A. For God to Glorify His Name

***John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."***

#### B. For God to Make Jesus' Enemies a Footstool

***Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."***

#### C. For the Elect to Be Saved

***Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--<sup>2</sup> a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time***

***2 Timothy 2:10 I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.***

#### D. For Gospel Advance Among Unreached People Groups

***Matthew 24:14 this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.***

#### E. For Sanctification to Proceed Among True Believers

***Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

#### F. For Daily Physical Needs to be Met

***Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

***Philippians 4:19 my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.***

#### G. For the Persecuted Among God's People to Receive Justice



***Luke 18:7-8 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.***

H. For Protection from Satan's Attacks

***James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

I. For a Filtering of Our Temptations and a Way of Escape During Temptation

***1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.***

J. For a Powerful Sense of God's Presence

***James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.***

***Hebrews 13:5 God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."***

K. For a Renewal of Strength for God's People

***Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

L. For the Peace of God to Control Our Minds

***Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

M. For Forgiveness of Specific Sins

***1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

N. For Christ to Return Soon

***Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon.***

***Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon!"***

***Revelation 22:12 Behold, I am coming soon!***

***Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."***