

Does Man Need God?

By Everett Hardin

Man is incurably religious. He is born with an innate disposition to worship something greater than himself. Man's behavior under differing circumstances proves this to be correct. By his very nature man is a praying being; in time of shock, he instinctively cries out to God; when trouble strikes, he involuntarily calls upon God; when some great deliverance, for which he has been yearning comes, he utters an unconscious, "**thank you God.**" A man may have no faith in God or in what God has said, but what he says and does demonstrates an inherent religious instinct.

The universal tendency to pray is indicated in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple he had built for Jehovah. "*Moreover concerning this stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched arm; if they come and pray in this house; Then hear thou from the heavens,*" 2 Chron. 6:32-33.

To the one who believes in God, prayer is a special privilege as well as an obligation. When the believer prays, solemn thoughts should fill the soul; for the finite creature is before the infinite creator, ruler, and sustainer of the universe. He is before the God of heaven and earth, communing and talking with God, seeking His fellowship and casting his anxieties upon God, believing that He cares for him. It is indeed a blessed favor bestowed upon mankind when the eternal God invites him to share a joyous fellowship and communion with Him.

Man, frail creature that he is, living for such a brief moment, in so vast a universe, stands in need of resources far beyond human ability to provide. These needs may be spiritual, moral, physical or material. Solomon well expressed this weakness when he said, "*I am but a little child; I know not how to come in or go out,*" I Kgs. 3:7. He needed guidance, and understanding that only an infinite being could provide; and so he asked God for wisdom to supply this need. Jeremiah reemphasized this need of mankind when he said, "*Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps,*" Jer. 10:23. The history of mankind confirms this weakness and need of man, and his dependence on a higher power for help, strength, and guidance in this pilgrimage through life.

God Hears Prayer

Man's need of a personal God cannot be realized unless God hears his utterances to Him. If God is unable to hear man's prayers, then prayer is a tragic delusion. The fact of God's ability and willingness to hear man's prayers is affirmed in James 4:8, "*Draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you.*" In prayer man moves upward to God, and God, Who hears him, moves downward to man. God would not draw nigh to man were He not able and willing to hear his prayers. Asariah testified to Asa, "*The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him he will forsake you,*" 2 Chron. 15:2. The fact that God hears prayer is affirmed in I Peter 3:12, "*for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*" God is

never too busy to hear the prayers of the faithful who seek audience with him.

Conditions of Acceptable Prayer

1. Sincerity is a prerequisite of successful prayer. Jesus pleaded for sincerity when He said, *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward,”* Matt. 6:5. As they stood in public places they sought to attract the attention of men rather than God. Looking to men for their reward, they missed the reward of heaven. The Psalmist gave us an example of an acceptable prayer. *“Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayers, that goeth not out of feigned lips,”* Psalm 17:1

2. Prayer to God must be fervent. Our prayer should not be halfhearted and listless. *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months,”* Jas. 5:16-17. Elijah was a mere mortal with the same frailties we have, but God heard him when he prayed fervently. *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in his prayers,”* Col. 4:12. Epaphras was earnestly striving for the Colossians in his prayers.

3. We should be persistent in prayer. Consistency in prayer is taught by the parable of the unjust judge and the widow, who came to him, Luke 18:1-8. *“He spoke a parable unto this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.”* Jesus told the story of a wicked judge who was moved to help a certain widow, not as an act of justice but because she kept bothering him by her continual coming, and made application, saying, *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”* the widow did not lose patience, or faint because the answer she sought was not immediate as she would have preferred. God loves us and is willing to answer our prayers, if we will be persistent in our prayers, all the while waiting for the answer in God’s due time.

4. Praying without watchfulness is not sufficient. *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man,”* Luke 21:36. Christians are to be constantly on the alert for anything and everything that will keep them from praying or will hinder the effectiveness of their prayers. *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,”* I Pet. 5:8. Jesus gave His disciples a profound warning, *“Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation,”* Matt. 26:41. The one who prays with watchfulness will always be aware of the temptations that confront him and will avoid them with the help of God.

5. Without godly living prayer is vain. *“The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous,”* Prov. 15:29. Jesus expressed the need for godly living, *“if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,”* John 15:7. If we pray unto God for His blessings, and expect our prayers to be answered,

we must follow the path of obedience, and turn away from evil and do good. *“Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things which are pleasing in his sight,”* I John 3:22. If we fail to keep His commandments our prayers shall be as abomination, Prov. 28:9; Isa. 59:1,2.

6. Faith is a condition of effectual prayers. We must believe that *“God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,”* Heb. 11:6. We are assured that whatever we ask **in faith**, consistent with God’s will, it shall be given us. *“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened,”* Luke 11:9-10. James exhorts those who lack wisdom to request it of God, but he sets forth the absolute necessity of faith in such a request. *“But let him ask **in faith**, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord,”* Jas. 1:6-7. Let us be sure that our prayers are offered in faith, nothing doubting, for without faith they will never reach the throne of God.

7. Prayer must be offered according to God’s will. *“And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us,”* I John 5:14. Our prayer will not be effective unless it brings the human will into union with the divine will. This shows that we cannot make just any kind of request and expect God to grant it. We must be certain that the subject of our prayer is in keeping with God’s will, as revealed in His Holy Word. The disciples of Christ were taught to pray that the will of God be done on earth as it was done in heaven, Matt. 6:10. The will of God is not opposed in heaven, so there should be nothing to oppose His will on earth. It is not enough to pray that His will be done; we must do our part to see that it is carried out.

8. Prayer is never to cease. *“Pray without ceasing,”* I Thess. 5:17. *“Men ought always to pray and not to faint,”* Luke 18:1. Prayer can be made at all times, wherever the Christian may be, at all places. *“I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hand without wrath and doubting,”* I Tim. 2:8. The Christian may have an audience with God as long as he desires. He can talk with Him any minute of any hour of any day, at any time. God is not to be sought only as a refuge in time of trouble. He is also to be sought in time of affluence and triumph. We cannot afford to be busy here and there with the daily affairs of business, family and recreation and take no time to pray. The Christian who is too busy to pray is too busy to rely upon the grace and power of God, and he too busy to prepare for heaven.
