

## Questions and Answers #17

### What is Prayer?

Brian Kocourek, Pastor

September 19, 2007

This evening I would like to take our text from **Romans 9:16** "*It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*". And again from

**JOHN 8:34** *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

Now, when Paul said in, **ROMANS 6: 7** *For he that is dead is freed from sin.* He is saying the only way you can possibly be free is that you never were under sin to begin with. You never did do it as brother Branham said, and that is what justification is all about. In fact the words of Paul actually say in the Greek in **Romans 6:7** *For he that is dead is freed from sin.,* and the Greek word dikaioo {dik-ah-yo'-o} means to "*justify*" in other words you are, *freed to be righteous, declared, pronounced to be just ,or righteous, as he ought to be, or was meant to be..*

Now, tonight I would like to speak on prayer, because prayer is totally misunderstood by the majority of Christians today.

In **1 John 5:14.** we read "*If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us*"

Men today believe and teach that prayer changes things. Now that statement is ok if it is looked upon in the proper light. But what men do with that statement that in effect perverts that statement is that they believe that prayer will actually alter the state of affairs as God ordained them to be. Thus in effect your praying will change God's Mind.. And thus not only changing God's Mind, but in effect changing God's Purpose and plans. Thoughts like this are either blasphemy or a complete lack of knowledge concerning God and the Godhood of God.

The need for prayer is not for God to change His Will, but for us to change our will. The Scriptures teach us: "*The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory*" (**1 Sam. 2:6-8**).

Too many People believe that when we say, "prayer changes things", we actually mean that God changes things when men pray." Almost everywhere we go today we see sign or bumper stickers that say: "**Prayer Changes Things**". As to what these words mean it can be heard from the radio religion today, — "we are to persuade God to change his purpose."

They challenge the people to pray for America, pray that she might repent and change. They look for a revival that will never come, because we have "Thus Saith the Lord" that she will not repent.

They quote from the **II CHRONICLES 7:14** *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

But those words were spoken by God for another people and not this people, and not for this land, at least not for this land after the prophet of God has come and his message has been rejected. Those words can not produce fruit today, because **first** of all, the people will not humble themselves, and **secondly** they will not pray correctly, because He promised, **1 John 5:14**. *"If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us"* And His Word is His Will.

Thirdly, they will not seek his Face because they do not know Him, nor do they understand the Godhood of God. And **finally**, they will not turn from their wicked ways.

And what are the ways which God calls wicked? In the first place, they have turned down God's answer for them in this hour. God sent to them a Prophet and they have turned down His message, which came with a "Thus Saith the Lord", attached to it, which means they have turned down God Himself. And God has come down and they have turned from His Shout. And will they come back to Him? I think not. For Paul quoted God when He said,

**ACTS 13:41** *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*

The ways which God calls wicked and which they will not turn from is their course of life. That's what the Word "ways" means. It is the Hebrew Word, Derek and it speaks of the course of life and their moral character. And as we know this is an hour where the people are bombarded with homosexual propaganda continually through the illicit and immoral media which bombards the minds of the people so often on a daily and hourly basis that after a while the people have grown indifferent towards it, and instead of immoral acts flaming the fires of righteous indignation in you, it only seems to fan the flames of indifference. You just don't seem to care. You don't want to be bothered. And that is what happened in the first church age. They became indifferent. And Alpha must be repeated in Omega.

**77-1 EPHESIAN CHURCH AGE - CHURCH AGE BOOK Chptr 3.** *The very name, Ephesus, has a strange compound meaning, "Aimed at", and "Relaxed". The high aspirations of this age that had begun with the fullness of the Spirit, "the depth of God", whereby they were aiming at the high calling of God, began to give way to a less watchful attitude. A less ardent following of Jesus Christ began to manifest itself as an omen that in the future ages the physical vehicle called the church would sink to the awfulness of the "depth of Satan". It had become relaxed and was drifting. Already the age was backsliding. It had left its first love. 88-2 The fervent desire to please God, the passion to know His Word, the cry for reaching out in the Spirit, all begins to fade and instead of that church being on fire with the fire of God it has cooled off and become a bit formal. That is what was happening back there to the Ephesians. They were getting a bit formal. The abandonment to God was dying out and the people weren't too careful about what God thought of them as they began to be careful about what the world thought of them. That second generation coming on was just like Israel. They demanded a king to be like the other nations. When they did that, they rejected God. But they did it anyway. That is the history of the church. When it thinks more of conforming to the world instead of conforming to God, it isn't long until you see them stop doing things they used to do, and start doing things they wouldn't do initially. They change their manner of dress, their attitudes and their behaviour. They get lax. That is what "Ephesus" means: relaxed--drifting.*

Where is the righteousness among God's people today to take a stand against wrong, whether it be among your family, your child, your mother, your father, or a church member, or business associate. Will the people take a stand for God? I hardly see it any more. Yet a President will commit perjury, adultery, sodomy, and even right in the White House during working hours and the American people are not outraged, and simply don't care. We have a Vice President, and members of the senate or House who have committed felonies concerning graft and kickbacks, and should be serving time in prison, and when they are challenged, they reply, "***there is no governing authority.***" No governing authority? No constitution? No laws of the land? And what about the American people? They continue to vote for them because they are willingly ignorant. They know better but vote them in anyhow. And that is iniquity to do so. Iniquity is to do right and you won't do it. I ask you, "Are we at the end-time?" Are these a people whom God will hear their prayer?

No, God will not hear the prayer of the unrepentant sinner. But what of you and I? How do we balance our understanding of a sovereign God Whose mind and will and purpose and plans that can not be changed, with our need for prayer. If we can not change God's purpose and plan is there a need to pray? And the answer is YES!

When the Apostles asked Jesus how to pray, he never gave them a prayer to recite. He simply told them there are certain elements which are needed for your prayer to have any success. He began by saying,

***LUKE 11:1 ¶ And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.***

Now, if we take this scripture together with the witness by Matthew, we do not have Jesus telling them what words to say, as this verse would seem to suggest, but let's look at Matthew and see what Jesus is suggesting to them as he teaches them about prayer and how to pray.

***MATTHEW 6:9 ¶ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.*** Therefore, Jesus is not putting the Words in to their mouth and suggesting a prayer, but He is teaching them how to pray. He says, after this manner, or in this manner, or in this way.... Then we notice the way He approaches prayer to God.

1. You've got to recognize the One to whom you are addressing your prayer. He is the Sovereign God, the Creator of the universe, and yet He is your Father. ***Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*** Notice, ***Hallowed be thy name.*** The word hallowed means to venerate, lift up, worthy of worship.

First and foremost, Jesus tells us that prayer has been appointed that we should honor God first. God requires we should recognize that ***he alone is God, He alone is our object of Worship, and that there is no other beside Him.*** In presenting our prayer to God we would do well to remember the 10 commandments and especially the first commandment.

**EXODUS 20:2** *I [am] the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

**EXODUS 34:14** *For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name [is] Jealous, [is] a jealous God:* God requires that we shall proclaim his universal dominion: in petitioning God for rain, Elijah confessed God's control over the elements.

In praying to God to deliver a sinner from the wrath to come, we acknowledge **John 2:9** *"salvation is of the Lord"*; In coming to the Lord, we should declare his ruler-ship and sovereignty over the entire world.

**REVELATION 4:11** *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Again; God requires that we shall worship him, and prayer, real prayer, is an act of worship. Prayer is an act of worship in as much as it is the prostrating of the soul before him; in as much as it is a calling upon his great and holy name; in as much as it is the owning of his goodness, his power, his immutability, his grace, and in as much as it is the recognition of his sovereignty, proclaimed by our submission to his will. Even when Jesus spoke of the temple, he never called it the House of Sacrifice, but, the House of Prayer.

Again; prayer rebounds to God's glory, for in prayer we acknowledge. our dependency upon him. When we humbly entreat His Divine Presence, we cast ourselves upon his mercy, and bow down in acknowledgement of His Great Power. In seeking blessings from God we believe that he is the Author and Fountain of every good and perfect gift.

**JAMES 1:17** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

That prayer brings glory to God is further seen from the fact that prayer calls faith into exercise, and nothing from us is so honoring and pleasing to him as the confidence of our hearts. For we must first believe that He is, **HEBREWS 11:6** *But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

And through Faith we must confess that He is more than able to meet our needs. **II TIMOTHY 1:12** *nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

The next thing Jesus laid out in the pattern for prayer, after acknowledging the supremacy of God in Holiness I what we hear next in verse **10** *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.* In other words, Thy Will and Thy Will alone will reign supreme. Therefore, Lord Help my will to align with your will. He never said, my will be done, but Jesus said "Thy will" speaking to the Father.

In **EPHESIANS 3:11** we find that God's Purpose is eternal... *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*



And in **EPHESIANS 1:11** *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

Therefore if we are predestinated according to the eternal purpose of Him who works all things together for his Glory, and for our good, then it would only make sense to us that we would want things to work out in our lives what he has planned for us to begin with, knowing and trusting that all these things will somehow work together for our good.

**ROMANS 8:28** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose. 29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us?*

Now, that we have come to the place where we recognize His interest in our needs, we can continue with the pattern which Jesus set before us, as He said **LUKE 11:3** *Give us day by day our daily bread..* Now, comes forth our needs. Now, remember, Jesus told us while teaching us how to pray that the Father knew our needs even before we would ask.

**MATTHEW 6:7** *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 ¶ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

**LUKE 11:4** *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.* Notice how the Lord Jesus set the pattern for prayer to not only ask for the physical need but also for the spiritual blessing of forgiveness as well. Forgive us first of our sins and then help us to forgive those who are indebted to us. Forgive them as you forgive us. I think here is where we miss the boat so often. We ask forgiveness for our own sins but we are so lacking when it comes to asking the Lord to Forgive those who have injured us in any way. Sometimes I think we have become so hardened to the plight of others, and don't realize that Jesus has set forth a pattern here for us to come to God with the opportunity to be intercessors for others. He has given us the opportunity to be mediators and intercessors, and I think we have blown the opportunity so far.

Prayer is appointed by God for our spiritual blessing, as a means for our growth in grace. When seeking to learn the design of prayer, this should ever occupy us before we regard prayer as a means for obtaining the supply of our need. Prayer is designed by God for our humbling. Prayer, real prayer, is a coming into the presence of God, and a sense of his awful majesty produces a realization of our nothingness and unworthiness.

Again; prayer is designed by God for the exercise of our faith. Faith is begotten in the Word as we see in **Rom. 10:17**, but it is exercised in prayer as we see in **JAMES 5:15** *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. "*

Again; prayer calls our love into action. Concerning the hypocrite the question is asked, "*Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?*" (**Job 27:10**). But they that love the Lord cannot be long away from him, for they delight in unburdening themselves to him. Not only does prayer call love into action, but through the direct answers to our prayers, our love to God is increased —David said, "*I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications*" (**Psa. 116:1**). Again; prayer is assigned by God to teach us the value of the blessings we have sought from him, and it causes us to rejoice the more when he has bestowed upon us that for which we entreat him.

Thirdly, prayer is appointed by God for our seeking from him the things which we are in need of. But the unbeliever will say, "*If God has foreordained, before the foundation of the world, everything which happens in time, what is the use of prayer?*"

*If it is true that "of him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36), then why pray?*

The unbeliever will ask, *What is the use of me coming to God and telling him what he already knows? wherein is the use of me spreading before him my need, seeing he is already acquainted with it? What is the use of praying for anything when everything has been ordained beforehand by God?*

Prayer is not for the purpose of informing God, as if he were ignorant, (for Jesus made very clear while teaching the Apostle to pray in **Matt. 6:8**, He said, "*for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him*", Therefore our praying is to acknowledge. That we know that He does know what we are in need of.

Because Jesus goes on to tell us how the worth of prayer in a little parable.

**LUKE 11:5***And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9 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. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if [he ask] a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall [your] heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

**Prayer is not appointed** for the furnishing of God with the knowledge. of what we need, but it is designed as **a confession to him** of our sense of the need. In this, as in everything, God's thoughts are not as ours. God requires that his gifts should be sought for. He designs to be honored by our asking, just as he is to be thanked by us after he has bestowed his blessing.

However, the question still returns on us, If God be the predestinator of everything that comes to pass, and the regulator of all events, then is not prayer a vain exercise? But our answer comes from the fact that God commands us to pray — He said, *"Pray without ceasing"* (**1 Thess. 5:17**). And again, *"men ought always to pray"* (**Luke 18:1**). And again, *"the prayer of faith shall save the sick", and, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (**James 5:15,16**); The Lord Jesus Christ — our older brother and the perfect example in all things — was mainly a Man of Prayer. Then, it is evident, that prayer is neither meaningless nor valueless. But still this does not remove the difficulty nor answer the question with which we started out. What then is the relationship between God's sovereignty and Christian prayer?

First of all, we would say with emphasis, that our prayer should never be intended to change God's purpose, or create new ones just for us. God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but he has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means he has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but he has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal purpose of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. Even the prayers of his people are included in his eternal decrees. Therefore, instead of prayer being in vain, it is among the means through which God exercises his purposes. "If all things happened by mere chance, then prayer could be of no moral use; but since our prayers are directed and regulated by the direction of Divine wisdom, prayer has a place in the order of events" It was not God responding to my prayer for the laptops but my prayer was directed by the purpose of God, and therefore, by tapping into His Divine Will, our prayers become part of the Divine working of His will. A Sort of tapping into the Eternal Wellspring of God's Purpose and plan.

Prayer then becomes part of the execution of the very things that God declared and therefore are not meaningless. This is clearly taught in the Scriptures.

Elijah knew that God was about to give rain, but that did not prevent him from at once praying to God for it. (**James 5:17,18**).

Daniel "understood" by the writings of the prophets that the captivity was to last but seventy years, yet when these seventy years were almost ended, we are told that he "set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes" (**Dan. 9:2,3**).

God told the prophet Jeremiah "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end"; but instead of adding, there is, therefore, no need for you to supplicate me for these things, he said, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you" (**Jer. 29:12**).

In **Ezek. 36:1-38** we read of the explicit, positive, and unconditional promises which God has made concerning the future restoration of Israel, yet in **Ezek. 36:37** of this same chapter we are told, *"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them"*! So God knows before hand what we will pray for.

Here then is the design of prayer: not that God's will may be altered, but that it may be accomplished in his own good time and way. It is because God has promised certain things, that we can ask for them with the full assurance of faith. It is God's purpose that his will shall be brought about by his own appointed means and that he may do his people good upon his own terms, and that is, by the "means" and "terms" of entreaty and supplication. Did not the Son of God know for certain that after his death and resurrection he would be exalted by the Father? Sure He did. Yet we find him asking for this very thing: "*O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (**John 17:5**)! Did not he know that none of his people could perish? Yet he petitioned the Father to "keep" them (**John 17:11**)!

Finally; it should be said that God's will is immutable, and cannot be altered by our crying. When the mind of God is not toward a people to do them good, it cannot be turned to them by the most fervent and persistent prayers of those who have the greatest interest in him — "*Then said the Lord unto me, 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth'*" (**Jer. 15:1**). The prayers of Moses to enter the promised land is also another example of this same thing.

Our views respecting prayer need to be revised and brought into harmony with the teaching of Scripture on the subject. The prevailing idea seems to be, that I come to God and ask him for something that I want, and that I expect him to give me that which I have asked. But this is a most dishonoring and degrading conception. The popular belief reduces God to a servant, our servant: doing our bidding, performing our pleasure, granting our desires.

No; prayer rather, is a coming to God, telling him my need, committing my way unto the Lord, and leaving him to deal with it as seems best to him. This makes my will subject to his will, instead of, seeking to bring his will into subjection to mine. No prayer is pleasing to God unless the spirit motivating it is, "not my will, but Thine be done". "When God bestows blessings on a praying people, it is not for the sake of their prayers, as if he was inclined and turned by them; but it is for his own sake.

God answers our prayers for His own sovereign will and pleasure. Should someone ask you, What purpose is prayer? We should answer, 'Prayer is the way and means God has appointed, for the communication of the blessing of his goodness to his people.' For though he has purposed, provided, and promised them, yet he will be sought first, in order to give them, and therefore it is a duty and privilege To ask. When we are blessed with a spirit of prayer, it is good because it is then that God intends to bestow the good things asked, which should be asked always with submission to the will of God, saying, 'Not my will but thine be done'

Perhaps. the one thing that bothers Christians more than anything else is unanswered prayer. we ask God for something: so far as we are able to judge, we have asked in faith believing we will receive that for which we have asked the Lord: and we know we have asked earnestly and repeatedly, but the answer does not seem to come. The result is, in many cases, our faith in the efficacy of prayer seems to weaken, until hope gives way to despair and the closet is altogether neglected.



But every real prayer of faith that has ever been offered to God has been answered? He promised. Real prayer is a coming to God, telling him our need, committing our way unto the Lord, and then leaving him to deal with the case as seems best to him. This allows God to answer the prayer in whatever way he sees fit, and often, his answer may be the very opposite of what would be most acceptable to our own mind; yet, if we have really left our need in his hands, it will be his answer, nevertheless. Let us look at two examples.

In **John 11:1-44** Lazarus was sick unto death. The Lord "loved" him, but he was absent from Bethany. The sisters sent a messenger unto the Lord acquainting him of their brother's condition. And note particularly how their appeal was worded — "*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" That was all. They did not ask him to heal Lazarus. They did not request him to hasten at once to Bethany. They simply spread their need before him, committed the case into his hands, and left him to act as he deemed best! And what was His reply? Did he respond to their appeal and answer their request? Certainly he did, though not, perhaps, in the way they had hoped. He answered by abiding "*two days still in the same place where he was*" (**John 11:6**), and allowing Lazarus to die! But in this instance, that was not all. Later, he journeyed to Bethany and raised Lazarus from the dead. I use this to illustrate the proper attitude for the believer to take before God in the hour of need. The next example will emphasize, rather, God's method of responding to his needy child.

In **2 Cor. 12:1-21**. The apostle Paul had been given an unheard of privilege. He had been transported into Paradise. His ears have listened to and his eyes have gazed upon that which no other mortal had heard or seen this side of death. The wondrous revelation was more than the apostle could endure. He was in danger of becoming "puffed up" by his extraordinary experience. Therefore, a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure. And the apostle spreads his need before the Lord; on three occasions he asks God to remove his thorn in the flesh. Was his prayer answered? Assuredly, though not in the manner he had desired. The "thorn" was not removed, but grace was given to bear it. The burden was not lifted, but strength was vouchsafed to carry it.

Does someone object that it is our privilege to do more than spread our need before God? Are we reminded that God has, as it were, given us a blank check and invited us to fill it in? Is it said that the promises of God are all inclusive, and that we may ask God for what we will? If so, we must call attention to the fact that it is necessary to compare scripture with scripture if we are to learn the full mind of God on any subject, and as this is done we discover God has qualified the promises given to praying souls by saying, "*If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us*" (**1 John 5:14**).

Real prayer is communion with God, so that there will be common thoughts between his mind and ours. What is needed is for him to fill our hearts with his thoughts, and then his desires will become our desires flowing back to him. Here then is the meeting place between God's sovereignty and Christian prayer: *If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us*, and if we do not so ask, he does not hear us; as saith the apostle James, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye might consume it upon your lusts*" or desires (**James 4:3**).

But did not the Lord Jesus tell his disciples, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*" (**John 16:23**)? He did; but this promise does not give praying souls carte blanche. These words of our Lord are in perfect accord with those of the apostle John — "*If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us.*" What is it to ask "in the name of Christ"? Surely it is very much more than a prayer formula, the mere concluding of our supplications with the words "in the name of Christ." To apply to God for anything in the name of Christ, it must needs be in keeping with what Christ is! To ask God in the name of Christ is as though Christ himself were the suppliant. We can only ask God for what Christ would ask. To ask in the name of Christ, is therefore, to set aside our own wills, accepting God's! And to ask outside of God's Word is to ask what God can not give. He is the Word.

Now, what is our definition of prayer? **Prayer is not so much an act as it is an attitude — an attitude of dependency, dependency upon God.** Prayer is a confession of our weakness, our helplessness. Prayer is the acknowledgment of our need and the spreading of it before God. We do not say that this is all there is in prayer, it is not: but it is the primary element in prayer. Prayer is both an attitude and an act, a human act, and yet there is the divine element in it too. Prayer is fundamentally an attitude of dependency upon God. Therefore, prayer is the very opposite of dictating to God. Because prayer is an attitude of dependency, the one who really prays is submissive, submissive to the divine will; and submission to the divine will means, that we are content for the Lord to supply our need according to the dictates of his own sovereign pleasure. And hence it is that we say, every prayer that is offered to God in this spirit is sure of meeting with an answer or response from him.

Prayer is not the requesting of God to alter his purpose or for him to form a new one. Prayer is the taking of an attitude of dependency upon God, the spreading of our need before him, then asking for those things which are in accordance with his will, and therefore there is nothing whatever inconsistent between divine sovereignty and Christian prayer.

In **Jer 10:23** we are told "*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*" (also **Prov. 16:9**); and yet in many of his prayers, man presumes to direct the Lord as to his way, and as to what he ought to do: even implying that if only he had the direction of the affairs of the world and of the church, he would soon have things very different from what they are. We can't deny this. Anyone with any spiritual discernment at all could not fail to detect this spirit in many of our modern prayer meetings where the flesh holds sway. How slow we all are to learn the lesson that the haughty creature needs to be brought down to his knees and humbled into the dust. And this is where the very act of prayer is intended to put us. But man (in his usual perversity) turns the footstool into a throne, from whence he would fain direct the Almighty as to what he ought to do giving the onlooker the impression that if God had half the compassion that those who pray have, all would quickly be put right! Such is the arrogance of the old nature even in a child of God. Our main purpose in prayer then is for submitting our wills to God's. But it must also be added, that prayer is much more than a pious exercise, and far otherwise than a mechanical performance. Prayer is, indeed, a divinely appointed means whereby we may obtain from God the things we ask, providing we ask for those things which are in accord with his will.