

## Midweek Message

*“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12 ESV)*

We’ve been working through several aspects of prayer and what God has revealed to us in His Word regarding the great privilege we have been given in prayer. As I’ve stated before, we’ll never exhaust every teaching that concerns our prayer lives, but we can certainly increase our knowledge of prayer as we look to the Scriptures. In the Scripture above from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans he calls us to be “constant in prayer” whether our lives are going well and we’re rejoicing in the hope we have through Jesus, or especially when we face times of tribulation in which we patiently wait for the Lord to answer our cries for help. As God’s people we should always be a praying people who continually exercise this great privilege we’ve been given in our communion and communication with our God. Now, in this message I would like to share a few points that I do hope will encourage you to spend time with the Lord in prayer.

**First**, prayer is grounded in God’s sovereignty. I was reading an article the other day in which the writer made this very point. He points out that if God isn’t sovereign over everything then we have no hope regarding anything we ask of Him. Have you ever thought about that before? We talk a lot about God’s sovereignty in the church, especially in Reformed churches, but have you ever related it to prayer? You see, God is sovereign over everything throughout the whole created universe. The Psalmist tells us, *“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3 ESV)*. Now doesn’t that give you a sense of confidence in that God can and will do all that He pleases? There is no authority higher than God and nothing that exists can stop Him from carrying out His desires. He has absolute authority and control over all of creation, determining what has occurred, is occurring, and will even occur as we move forward in history. When Jesus wanted to express the comfort we can receive from knowing that God is ultimately in control of all things, especially in times of persecution, He said this:

*“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:28-31 ESV).*

There should be great comfort experienced in this wonderful truth of God’s sovereignty as we realize that even the smallest detail, such as the number of hairs on our head, are all fixed according to God’s determination. You see, our God is always in the details and there’s nothing that He cannot or will not do in order to bring about His plan for our redemption. Perhaps knowing this great truth is why the Apostle Paul expressed such confidence with he said,

*“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen”. (Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV).*

I’ve often wondered if we ever ask enough of God, doing so for His glory, but also for the well-being of His people. Maybe we just need to accept the reality of a sovereign God who seeks the good of His people so that we might pray with confidence knowing that He will answer according to His good purpose which takes us to the next point.

**Second**, prayer is gratified through God’s sufficiency. Not only is God sovereignly able to do as He desires, but He also has the resources necessary to carry out His determined plan for this world as well as for our lives.

I've always enjoyed the Old Testament story of Moses and the people of Israel who were crying out for meat as they passed through the desert. Moses is exasperated and quite beside himself, even angry at God for putting him in charge of these rebellious people. However, God tells Moses that He will give them meat until they literally become sick of it and Moses is still doubtful that it can happen and questions God in this way:

*“But Moses said, ‘The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!’ Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Is the Lord's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.’” (Numbers 11:21-23 ESV).*

As the story continues God sent a great wind that brought a significant number of quail to the camp. However, because of their rebellion against God, He also sent a plague among them as discipline for their sinfulness against Him. Now, for us, we can draw great comfort from the truth that God has infinite resources at His disposal and can, even will, come to our aid as He supplies what we need so that we may glorify Him. When the Philippians gave sacrificially to the ministry of the Apostle Paul, some of whom went without in order to help him, he told them, *“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19 ESV).* When Jesus wanted to convey the same great truth of God's sufficiency, that He will take care of us as we journey through life in this world, He said,

*“Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33 ESV).*

Listen, our God knows our needs even before we come to Him in prayer. However, He has also established prayer as the means by which we can receive what we need for life in this world. When we're striving to live for Him through the power of His grace, we can be assured that God will provide what we need, and even at times, what we desire, as we live our lives for Him.

**Finally**, prayer is graced by God's salvation. I believe the writer to the Hebrews makes this point very clear when he says,

*“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV).*

As our great High Priest, our Lord intercedes for us before the throne of God, having atoned for our rebelliousness, cleansing us of our sins, and presenting us as those clothed in His righteousness. As God's beloved people, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who not only knows what life is like in this world, having experienced it firsthand, but had overcome this world and is able to sympathize with us.

Prayer is a great and wonderful privilege given to God's people. We need to constant in prayer, even more so, as we continue to live in a world that's filled with so much uncertainty.

***Pastor Mark***