PRAYER: A DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

A quick way to make people Christians feel guilty is to ask them, “How is your prayer life?” Why is this so? Because most of us find prayer difficult! Why? Because we all have both a deep desire to pray and a deep resistance against it. We want to be close to God, but also want to keep some distance.

These tensions come from the awareness of who God is. There is faith and fear, hope and anxiety. On the one hand we believe and hope that God is love and that all He does is with our best interest in mind and on the other hand we are afraid that if God gets to know us very well He might not love us.

There is also tension because we also know from Scripture that God is holy and sovereign and therefore demands total allegiance. He is a jealous lover who asks for our total, undivided attention. And that is very demanding for people who want help, but not too much interference.

As long as we reduce prayer to occasional piety where we pray only when we feel like it (which isn’t very often) we never come to grips with the mystery of God’s love. Of course we love God, but there are some areas we would rather keep away from Him.

Many have seen the statement, “Prayer changes things.” And while that is true, a greater truth is that prayer changes people.” We want to grow, but we don’t want to change.

Prayer is a two-way communication between an infinite God and finite man. Through prayer we gain access to the mind and heart of God. Through prayer we also gain insight into our own hearts. Knowledge of God leads to knowledge of self. And this throws us back on the mercy of God.

Prayer leads us to humility as we realize our sinfulness and thus our dependence upon God. Prayer is a declaration of dependence. It is the recognition that what Jesus said is true,

“Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Jesus did not say, “Apart from Me, you can do a few things.”

Jesus did not say, “Apart from Me, you can do something.”

Jesus did say, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Nothing!
This is hard for us to believe. After all, God has made us in His image and likeness so we should be able to do all kinds of things apart from Him. The problem is that although we have been made in the image and likeness of God, we are fallen creatures. The Fall of man has rendered us helpless spiritually so that even our righteousness are but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

We are dependent creatures! And prayer is the primary way by which we live in dependence. Prayer is a natural way that we show our recognition that God is our Source for everything. Our lack of prayer shows our unbelief, pride, arrogance, and independence.

I would like to illustrate our dependence in the area of work and money. Why? Because it is the most practical thing I can think of. After all, work and money are central to our lives. Unless we are already retired, our money is the result of our work (including our work in investing). Work and money are tied to each other to a certain extent. Try to not work and yet receive wages. It doesn’t work. Because wages are the benefits we receive from work.

Many of us would argue that we have so and so much money because we earned it the old fashion way: we worked for it. But that is not the whole story. We do not have what we have only because we worked for it or because someone gave us some money. We have what we have because God allowed us to have it, possibly because God blessed us with it.

Just as Jesus, God’s Son, was dependent upon His heavenly Father, so must we, His creatures, be dependent upon Him for everything.