**Chapel Class**

**12.01.19**

**“Providence and Prayer: If God already knows, why pray?” Week 1**

**The Providence of God**

* 1. “God’s works of providence are his most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.” (Westminster Shorter Cat. Q. 11)
  2. “If creation, was a unique exercise of divine energy causing the world to be, providence is a continued exercise of that same energy whereby the Creator, according to his will, (a) keeps all creatures in being, (b) involves himself in all events and (c) directs all things to their appointed end.” (J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*)
  3. Key Texts: Eph.1:11; Psa. 33:10-11; Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23
  4. Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. III and V (handout)
  5. “The doctrine of providence teaches Christians that they are never in the grip of blind forces (fortune, chance, luck, fate) all that happens to them is divinely planned and each event comes as a new summons to trust, obey and rejoice knowing that all is for one’s spiritual and eternal good (Rom 8:28). (J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*)

**The Nature of Prayer**

1. A complete definition of prayer is obtained by combining the two answers of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, thus: “Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, f*or things agreeable to his will,* in the name of Christ *by the help of his Spirit*, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.” (The clauses italicized above are the only two which are not found in both LC and SC). Key texts: Ps 10:17; Ps 62:8; Matt 7:7-8; 1 John 5:14; John 16:23-24; Rom 8:26 (Palmer, *A Theology of Prayer*, 13)
2. A “dynamic monologue” rather than a conversation with God. “In this speaking to God, the Spirt of heaven stirs the spirit of the believer to speak to the heavenly Father. The intercession of the Son carries this prayer to the ear and heart of the Father. Then in deference to the voice of the Son with whom the believer is united, the Father lovingly responds, He causes the thoughts and inclinations of the believer both to engage the divine will (to accomplish God’s purposes) and to inform the human will (to desire and perform God’s purposes.” (Chapell, 177)
3. “As Hallesby reminds us, prayer is the risen Jesus coming on with his resurrection power, given free reign our lives, then using his authority to enter any situation and change things.” (Kelly31)
4. Key passages on prayer:
5. Luke 11:5-13 imposing prayer; shamelessly persistent or even ‘pushy’
6. Matt. 7:9-11 continuous prayer
7. Luke 18:1-8 persistent prayer
8. Jas 5:16b-18 genuine faith of an ordinary man
9. The (straightforward) promises of God

Mark 11:22-24; John 14:13-14; John 15:7; John 16:23-24; 1John 5:14-15

1. The (conditional) Fine Print

No blank check. Promise of Matt. 7:9-11 based on “your will be done” (6:10)

John Frame, citing Wayne Grudem: “Effective prayer that honors God and that God honors typically occurs in several ‘spheres.’”

1. In Jesus’ name. John 14:13-14; 16:23-24
2. In the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26-27
3. In accordance with God’s will. 1 John 5:14-15
4. In faith. Matt 21:22; Mark 11:24; James 1:6
5. With obedience. Ps 66:18; 1 John 3:21-22
6. With humility. Matt 6:5; Luke 18:11-13
7. Persistence; after continual asking. James 4:2
8. Earnestness

***How do providence and prayer work together?***

*Two pictures*

* A sovereign God with an all-encompassing plan. Ps 33:10-11; Eph 1:11
* An ordinary man with genuine power. 1 Chron 4:9-10; James 5:16b-18.

*Two complimentary truths*

* God has an all-encompassing plan and is utterly sovereign over all.
* Human prayer really is effective in the supernatural realm.

*A hidden harmony*

* The *revealed* will of God is spelled out in God’s word.
* The *secret* will of God is beyond our reach (Deut. 29:29)
* These are not two wills, but different *aspects* of the same will of God.
* God’s plan does not rule out our prayer. Rather, our prayers are part of the outworking of those plans; “a preparation for the release of the blessings of God.” (Kelly 58)

“Although the main emphasis of our praying must be on the clearly revealed will of God in Scripture, this does not mean that His secret will has no connection with our praying. On the contrary when we pray on the basis of the revealed will, we are lining ourselves up with the person of God and thus with the secret purposes of God.”

“That is not to say that we understand how He is carrying out those purposes. We are not let into the secret of why he is letting strange things happen or why he delays answers to prayer. We may only be able to hazard a guess at the inner workings of God’s plan, but we can know as we pray ‘Thy will be done’ on the basis of his written word, our prayers are being caught up in the eternal purposes of God.”

“There in ‘the grinding of the wheels of providence,’ they are somehow being used to activate the eternal decrees of God in space-time history.” (D. Kelly 56-57)