

Prayer Is Providential

Part 1

Text: Esther 4:14

INTRODUCTION:

1. There is a God who hears and responds to prayer!
2. However, man often wonders how God accomplishes the answer to prayer.
3. Must He perform a miracle? Or does He only rely upon natural law?
4. It is helpful to understand the connection between God's providence and the answer to prayer.

I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

- A. The word "providence" has to do with forethought and provision (Acts 24:2; Romans 13:14).
- B. Easton defines it as, "God's preserving and governing all things by means of second causes."
 1. It is more than natural law.
 2. It is less than miraculous.
- C. Consider three Biblical examples of God's providence:
 1. Joseph (Genesis 50:20)
 2. Esther (Esther 4:14)
 3. Jesus (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10)

II. PROVIDENCE AND THE PRAYER OF ELIJAH

- A. The prayer of Elijah affected the weather (James 5:17-18).
- B. Yet, his prayer was not answered by a miracle (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-46).
- C. God worked by controlling His natural laws.

III. PROVIDENCE AND THE PRAYER OF THE CHRISTIAN

- A. James used this event in the life of Elijah to illustrate the power of prayer.
- B. The Christian is to pray for the afflicted (2 Timothy 2:3, 9; 4:5; Romans 15:30-32).
- C. The Christian is to pray for the physically sick:
 1. Prayer of intercession
 2. Joined with the use of medicine (cf. 2 Kings 20:1-7)
 3. Results in healing (Philippians 2:25-27)
 4. According to God's will (cf. 2 Timothy 4:20; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9)
- D. The Christian is to pray for the spiritually sick.
 1. Physical sickness should cause one to consider his spiritual health.
 2. Sin may be forgiven through repentance, confession, and prayer.

CONCLUSION: *GOD IS ABLE!* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Practical Prayer

Exercises

Prayer Is Providential Part II

1. Read Deuteronomy 3:23-27. Did God give Moses what he asked for in prayer?
2. Read Luke 9:30-31. Did the fact that God answered Moses' prayer with a "No" mean that He had forsaken Moses?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What do you think are some reasons that God would answer a prayer with a "No"?
4. What do you think are some reasons that God would make one wait for the answer to his or her prayer?
5. Read Matthew 15:21-28. Why did Jesus not answer this woman's prayer immediately? What did she learn from this experience?
6. Read Luke 23:34. Was this prayer of Jesus answered immediately? If not, why did Jesus pray this prayer?