

Doctrinal Summary of Prayer: Different Types for Different Circumstances

Throughout the New Testament different types of prayer are identified for the Church Age believer. One type of prayer is expressed by Paul in Colossians 4:2.

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

The word “prayer” is translated from the Koine Greek word προσευχή (“pros-eu-chae”) which more literally means, “the act of petitioning another who has the ability and authority to grant what is desired in the petition, based on response.” It identifies the action of requesting what is desired from someone who has the ability, means, and authority to grant it. However, there is no obligation on the part of the one being asked to grant what is being asked for. Neither is the request made with the expectation that what is asked for will indeed be granted. It is purely an expressed desire for something that leaves its granting to the one who was petitioned. Thus, this type of prayer is a general request for what is wanted without any urgency or obligation placed upon the one asked to grant the request. It is based on response to the individual’s desire for whatever is being asked. Believers are to be devoted to asking God for what they want without wavering in bringing their desired petitions to Him. This is different than asking for what is urgently needed in one’s circumstances, such as is found in 1 Peter 3:12.

“For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

The word “prayer” is translated from the Koine Greek word δέησιν (“de-ae-sin”) which more literally means, “urgent request for a specific need to be supplied by another, based on response.” It describes an urgency behind the request that is based on the circumstance being faced. This type of request is for what an individual lacks and urgently needs in order to have the pressure of his present circumstance removed. These requests can express specific physical or spiritual needs for oneself or others, based on response to the present circumstance being faced. The request may be granted or may not be granted, for God has no obligation to grant the request unlike some prayer requests such as that which is asked for in 1 John 5:14.

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

The word “ask” is translated from the Koine Greek word αἰτώμεθα (“ai-toh-meh-tha”) which more literally means, “if we might participate in the continuous type of action to request that which is rightfully ours to request.” It identifies the action of asking for something that an individual has a right to access, possess, or utilize. His right to what he is asking for is based on a position or relationship that he has with the one to whom he makes his request. Thus, what he is asking for is rightfully his to ask for. The believer has been granted the right to ask for many things that God has granted him a share in as a result of his position in Christ. However, just because the believer has a right to something does not mean that God will automatically give him what he is asking for. The motivation behind his request also matters.

Each of these types of prayers reflect different types of requests. Utilizing each is the right of the believer because of his position in Christ. Yet, each of these types of prayers are used in different circumstances.