



Part Two - January 5, 2020

OPEN

Do you notice disclaimers...especially when said so quickly at the end of a radio or TV ad? A disclaimer is “a formal statement saying that you are not legally responsible for something.” [Cambridge English Dictionary](#)

Can you imagine a “divine disclaimer”? We know from His self-revelation that God is without limit in wisdom, power, righteousness, knowledge, and more. Now, our *theology* may not limit Him, but in *practice* we sometimes do!

Last week we launched a trio of sermons titled “Learning to Lean” – with thanks to songwriter John Stallings who wrote, “*I’m learning to lean on Jesus.*”

As we explored Psalm 145 last Sunday we asserted that the most essential way that we can express our trust in God is to pray. But it is not about **prayer as ritual** such as the prayers at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Rather, we must pursue **prayer as relationship**.

This means developing a heart of reliance upon God. Consider Jesus’ invitation to His disciples to practice “vigilant dependence” (Matthew 26:41 – “watch and pray”). This means prayer that listens as well as speaks.

Timothy Keller made this statement: “To fail to pray, then is not to merely break some religious rule – it is a failure to treat God as God.” (**Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God**, Penquin, 2014, 26)

We could therefore also say that to fail to lean, is a failure to treat God as God. This is conclusion is backed up by our Scripture for today – Psalm 146. In this text we find that “learning to lean” has everything to do with recognizing God for who He is and trusting Him implicitly.

“*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*” (Hebrews 11:16) In the ten verses of Psalm 146 we have a concise primer for prayer – a great guide for learning to lean on Jesus.

DIG

[1] Approach with Adoration - vv. 1-2

How do you begin your prayers? Just pause for a moment and think what your default prayer protocol is. The way that we approach God says much about whether we have a heart of “vigilant dependence” or not. The first two verses of Psalm 146, our worship focus for today, reveal the proper way to approach God in prayer.

The author commands himself to praise God – this is significant self-talk (v.1). Whereas we know that Psalm 145 was written by David, there is doubt about who wrote this psalm – some think it was Haggai (and that Zechariah wrote 147). Whoever penned this praise song lived with great intentionality: “I will praise...I will sing” (v.2). And note the phrase “while I have my being” (NASB). This suggests that prayer is part of this person’s lifestyle.

True prayer is not information or request based. It is not a problem delivery service – not *Purolator* but *Prayerolator!*? Prayer is the supernatural product of a growing relationship with Jesus – fueled by adoration.

[2] Forsake the False - vv. 3-4

The next part of prayer is the commanded to “not trust in princes, in mortal man” who cannot save. We must forsake all false supports. It is natural for us to look to the powerful, influential, or resourceful for answers. Consider the painting: “[A Little Prince Likely In Time To Bless A Royal Throne](#)” by Edmund Blair Leighton (1904). What does this suggest about our tendency to trust in princes instead of God?

The problem is mortality. Not only do princely people perish, but their plans and purposes do as well – as we read in the NLT, “all their plans die with them”. There is a play on words here. In verse 3 the term “man” (*adam*) is played off of the term “earth” (*dama*) in verse 4. The emphasis shines on the inability of a person to support us.

Are we learning to lean upon God rather than people? Leaning is a good skill to develop, unless you are a building! Of course, a leaning building has put Pisa, Italy on the map! But the reality is that we are going to rely or lean upon *something*. Just as surely as the tower of Pisa is slowly succumbing to gravity, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment if we “trust in princes”. Prayer should be declaration of dependence upon God.

[3] Embrace the Eternal - vv. 5-9

Much of the time our prayers bog us down in our problems. But phase three of true prayer, says Psalm 146, is to “turn our eyes upon Jesus.”

How do we do that? We lean into the truth about who God is. Now if prayer is merely a recital of requests, then we will become rather anemic when it comes to embracing the Eternal One. That is why Paul's prayers the New Testament churches were about expanding their vision of who God is, and who we are as His children.

Approaching prayer this way, we remove pressure for us to effect an outcome and prayer becomes an opportunity for God to transform and bless us. Notice that verse 5 is, in fact, a Beatitude with the formula, "How blessed is..."

Blessing comes to those *help and hope* is in God. Matthew 5 in the Amplified translation includes these vivid descriptions of such blessing. Consider whether these describe your prayer journey...

- Spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired
- Forgiven, refreshed by God's grace
- Inwardly peaceful, spiritually secure, worthy of respect
- Joyful, nourished by God's goodness
- Content, sheltered by God's promises
- Anticipating God's presence, spiritually mature
- Spiritually calm with life-joy in God's favor
- Morally courageous and spiritually alive with life-joy in God's goodness

Such blessing surrounds four essential aspects of God that we are invited to embrace in verses 6-9...

[a] *Creation* – v. 6

[b] *Justice* – v. 7

[c] *Healing* – v. 8

[d] *Protection* – v. 9

A. W. Tozer wrote that, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." What we think about God determines how we will approach Him in prayer. Are you learning to lean on Him?

[4] **Conclude with Confidence** - v. 10

When we come to verse 10 we have a reprise, of sorts. It might be tempting to see it as a nicely phrased conclusion to a song of praise. But it is a great expression of *confidence* in God! "The Lord will reign forever." It helps us to understand that true prayer concludes with confidence.

This should not surprise us. If we've first reoriented ourselves in praise of God and rejection of false hope...and if we have secondly embraced all of who God is and focused upon His greatness and glory...then certainty and confidence will follow.

This is not our confidence – it cannot be – but it is a grace gift of God to us. This is not to say that we have no part in the process. What is our role? It is to choose contentment and thanksgiving. Our sense of gratefulness is perhaps the greatest marker that we are experiencing confidence in the Lord – see Philippians 4:6-7.

REFLECT

We will lean upon someone! The question is who?

Who are you leaning upon for the needs of your life?

Is it God alone? How can you make God alone the One upon whom you lean?

Try reading and praying through these sections of Psalm 62.

¹ *For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.*

² *He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.*

⁵ *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

⁶ *He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*

⁷ *On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*

⁸ *Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.*