

The Posture of the Soul in Prayer

Written by Michael Gowens

“Because thine heart was tender...I also have heard thee, saith the Lord” 2 Kings 22:19

Bible characters practiced prayer in every conceivable physical position (sitting, standing, lying down, kneeling, hanging on a cross, and even crunched between the rib cage in a whale’s belly) suggesting that physical posture is not of primary importance to acceptable prayer. The posture of the soul, however, is crucial.

It may help to put one’s heart in frame to make a conscious effort to realize that one is in the very presence of God. “Jesus the friend of sinners,” said Roland Green, “knows that I’m kneeling there.” He sees you, hears your words, and is present with you while you pray. You are in his presence, the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19). F. B. Meyer said that we should never leave our prayer closets in the morning without concentrating intently on the fact that we are in the very presence of God. I agree.

We should always be reverent, therefore, when we pray, not glib and disrespectful (Ex. 3:5; Ps. 89:5; Ecc. 5:1-2). But we should also be free and bold, for we come before him in Calvary’s river of atoning blood, openly invited by him, coming as a child to the Father, not a slave to a cruel taskmaster.

Further, we must pray with confidence - confidence in the work of Christ who opened this way of access to the Father; confidence in the promises of God, and confidence that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us (1 Jno. 5:14-15). A Puritan balanced these two distinctive elements succinctly: “Urged by my need, invited by thy promises, called by thy Spirit, I enter thy presence, worshipping thee with godly fear, awed by thy majesty, greatness, glory, but encouraged by thy love.” Perhaps Jesus best encapsulates this blend of appropriate attitudes when he teaches us to pray saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” When the heart is bowed before the Lord in reverent humility and total dependence, the Lord will not disregard the prayer.

- Michael L. Gowens