

Foreword

THE BIBLE makes plain that humans bear the Image of God. This, the *Imago Dei*, gives man rationality, innate ideas and the *a priori* categories that account for his intelligence. As a rational being, man can think and share his thoughts by communicating with one another through language. This highly complex form of cognitive gifting even involves the process by which I am relaying my thoughts to you at this moment. It is only because we are created in the Image of God that we are established as the highest form of created beings on earth.

American Calvinist Philosopher, Gordon H. Clark, convincingly argues that man's ability to think and speak "were given to him by God for the essential purpose of receiving a verbal revelation, of approaching God in prayer, and of conversing with other men about God and spiritual realities."¹ Greatly influenced by Clark, American Theologian Carl F. H. Henry echoes this thesis,

The Bible depicts man as specially equipped by God for the express purposes of knowing God's rational-verbal revelation, of communicating with God in praise and prayer, and of discoursing with fellow-men about God and his will. God enabled the first Adam to express his thoughts linguistically.

¹ Clark, Gordon H. (1961). *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (136). Hobbs, NM, The Trinity Foundation

Human language is adequate for theological knowledge and communication because all men are divinely furnished with certain common ideas. Linguistics is therefore serviceable both to God's verbal revelation and to the divine inspiration of chosen writers for conveying revealed information.²

The significance of the biblical theist's philosophy of language is most emphatically shown by its monopoly on the only valid account and justification of the origin of human language. That God created humans with the intention of communicating with them implies that He created them with the ability to communicate. By reasoning from an axiom other than the Bible, man has produced some pretty fanciful inventions as to the origin of human language. None of them, however, are valid.

Since humans inherently possess the ability to communicate rationally as endowed by God for specific purposes such as receiving verbal revelation, prayer, and communicating with other humans about Him, it is no surprise to learn that Scripture is replete with passages recording verbal communication between God and man. In the passage of the burning bush we read that God said to Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Immediately upon learning of his *call* to go to Pharaoh in Egypt, Moses replied to God, "Who

² Henry, C. F. H. (1999). *God, Revelation, and Authority* (3:389). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" This is but one of many demonstrations of verbal communication between God and man that is *initiated by God*.

Scripture also contains many passages demonstrating *man's initiation* of verbal communication with God. When man initiates reverent communication with God, it is called prayer. Abraham prayed (Gen. 20:17), Isaac prayed (Gen. 25:21), Jacob prayed (Gen. 32:9-12), and Moses prayed (Exo. 8:30). In each of these instances we have an inerrant recording of these men approaching God through language with the belief that He hears them. The Old Testament records hundreds of instances of communication between God and man, and they are all in propositional form.

Fast forward to the New Testament and we read a summary of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He devoted a portion of the sermon to giving instructions on approaching God *properly* in prayer. Not only did Jesus verbally *instruct* His disciples on prayer, but He also *modeled* by example the way we are to pray. We also find many examples in the New Testament of the prayers of the Apostles. In a few cases the Apostle Paul includes in his letters some of the specific requests of his prayers. We also find several passages where Paul *asks* for prayer from others. Both Testaments teach the doctrine of prayer.

In this book, Mike Sarkissian does an excellent job of organizing the many mentions and references to prayer in the Bible. He is clear and understandable in his explanation of some difficult passages. Careful reading of Mike's exegesis and application of Scripture promises high reward. He labors to make proper distinctions where they are necessary and avoids irrelevant discussions so as to preserve the reverence and weight of the topic at hand. Therefore the book reads much like a handbook at times, which is exactly what one needs if they are serious about studying the biblical doctrine of prayer. There are too many new books that seem to be more about the author's personal view of a subject, but Mike's firm commitment to *Sola Scriptura* keeps his mind on track as he crucifies the desire to put just another opinion on the shelf.

Mike approaches the subject of prayer soberly, with fear and reverence for God and His Word. This is seen in his style where he rarely conjectures and is often repeating to the reader what the Bible has to say. This godly characteristic is also noticeable in his life. In person, Mike is cautious to speculate and quick to pray. May this method become contagious once again, and may more ministers of the Gospel discontinue flooding the market with new ideas and rather begin repeating to their people what the Bible has to say! It has been an honor and a blessing to know Mike Sarkissian personally. It has also been an honor and a blessing to pray to our God together many times alongside

him. It is my prayer that each reader of *Before God* gains a fuller appreciation and knowledge of the biblical doctrine of prayer, and that it results in an increasingly fuller prayer life for each one of us to the glory of God!

-Stephen Macasil