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The Prayer of Agur

Introduction

The following are a series of thoughts based on the writings of I do not know. I found them amidst my papers.

Several years ago the “Prayer of Agur” became a real hit among many believers. Indeed, at times it almost seemed like a “lucky charm” or “Mantra” which, if repeated, would bring blessing. When Agur made this prayer it was the words of a very devout individual acknowledging his need of wisdom and his general weakness before God. Wisdom in and of itself is a leaven which the Holy Spirit, through Paul, informs us that it “puffs up” (1 Cor 8:1), that is, makes the individual think they know a great deal. They may indeed know a great deal when it comes to earthly things but compared to the Almighty, men know virtually nothing. Solomon saw this and wrote, “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason” (Prov. 26:16). When a man recognizes his own lack of wisdom and understanding then he will depend on the Lord for enlightenment. Reality is, man never discovers anything, it is simply that God enlightened the individual to matters which had not been seen before.

In reading this prayer I am reminded of a student in a theology class which, when finishing his thesis, wrote in Greek, “For the glory of God”. That is the fundamental desire of Agur, that his life would be for the glory of God. In learning and seeking to live this ideal, Agur’s thoughts were focused on the following:

Infiniteness of The Greatness of God

Agur begins with an acknowledgement of his own understanding before God and confessing, “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy” (Prov. 30:2-3). It is a matter of self awareness that I find more and more the need for due reverence when speaking to God. He is not the “man upstairs” or as I heard the other week, “Dear daddy”. He is the Almighty and in my ignorance I do not really know how to speak to Him. It is a blessing from God that we have a High Priest who takes our worship, prayers etc. and is fully able to present them perfectly before God.

- a) The Queen of Sheba was amazed when she saw how the great King Solomon went up to the house of the Lord (1 Kgs. 10:5).
- b) When the people were gathered at Sinai they stood afar off (Ex. 20:18, 21).
- c) Moses and the elders were to worship “afar off” (Ex. 24:1).

Coming to pray to God or commune with Him it is good to remember the words of the ancient king who wrote: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Ecc. 5:2). God is beyond our comprehension and worthy to be glorified while there is breath in our bodies.

There is brought to our attention the incomprehensible abilities of the God to whom we are speaking. It is a series of rhetorical questions. He asks, “Who”, “Who”, “Who”, “Who”, “What” and finished with the challenge, “If thou canst tell?” (Prov. 30:4). Some think that we can tell God what we want done and expect Him to obey us. Naming it and claiming it without the contextual word of God is the tool of the devil for when the Lord was being tempted, Satan used the scriptures ignoring the context to tempt the Lord to “cast himself down” (Matt. 4:6). It was a temptation of presumptuousness and such is the “name it and claim it” religion. God is not there to serve us and respond according to our whims and wants. In recognizing who and what He is, never under any circumstances must we seek to advise, question or debate what He says. We must never instruct him on how to do things. He is God, “possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19) and He will do as He in wisdom and holiness decrees what to do. “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chron. 29:11).

We do know that, “If we ask any thing according to His will, he heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 Jn. 5:14-15). Knowing that the

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mind and ways of God are high above ours (Isa. 55:8-9), it is with deep reverence we ought to approach God. Agur then considers the Word of God.

Every Word of God Is Pure

Not only is the word of God pure, His statutes are right and His commandment is pure (Psa. 19:8). This indicates the integrity of the scriptures. To this we add:

- a) The sufficiency of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:16)
- b) The fidelity of the Scriptures (Dan. 10:12)
- c) The finality of the Scriptures (Rom. 4:1-13)

Because the scriptures are the inspired word of the Living God and in having them written, we can trust that word with absolute confidence. Observe, up to this point he has not yet made a petition. He is fixing his gaze on the undisturbed wonder of God and in that background he makes his petition.

Makes His Petition

It would appear that Agur was an elderly gentleman looking back over life but seeking the blessing of God for just a little longer. It is not a passive casual petition but an earnest God fearing plea. Recently there was report on the things people had wished they had done as they looked back on life. Among them were, I wish I'd had the courage to just be myself; had spent more time with the people I love; made spirituality more of a priority; loved more; taken better care of myself; thought about life's bigger question earlier. These are all very good and noble. Agur asks for two things, "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches" (Prov. 30:7-9). Then we come to the great aim of his life, that he will not take the name of God in vain (Prov. 30:9).

- 1) In the life of a christian there are four aspects: that which God has done, is doing, and will do for us despite ourselves, and that which He expects us to work with Him. It is hypocrisy to ask God to remove from me vanity and lies if we have no intention in ourselves by the power of the Holy Spirit to not do these things. I remember my old grandpa Milne. He got saved in middle age and had a dreadful problem with smoking a pipe. He had a real conscience about it and prayed the Lord would take it from him, but he kept the pipes and the tobacco. It was a contradiction in activity. Then one day he was asking the Lord for power to overcome it and the Spirit reminded him that God had already done it but Grandpa had not availed himself of the power available. At that moment he got up from his knees, took the pipe and the tobacco and threw them both in the fire. That was the end of the smoking. He worked with God.
- 2) Many years ago the "Rolling Stones" sang a song with words similar to, "Ain't got no satisfaction". They had come to the same conclusion as the writer of Ecclesiastes for he tried everything this world could offer, yet his constant refrain would be, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecc. 1:2; 12:8); "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc. 1:14; 2:17); "All is vanity" (Ecc. 1:2; 3:19; 12:8). Putting it in modern terminology he was saying, "all is empty, it does not satisfy and makes one discontented". Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). The Psalmist wrote, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22). We live in a world of emptiness where nothing it offers gives permanent contentment. A new car is bought, a new house, how wonderful it is and then shortly afterwards it wears off and we look for something else. How true are the words of scripture, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 Jn. 2:17). This is the reason the inspired apostle wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jn. 2:15).
- 3) "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me" (Prov. 30:8). Poverty in the economy of God is a blessing. It was something Job learned and it marked the life of our Lord (2 Cor. 8:9). However, a wise person will seek to avoid poverty by using that which they have carefully. At times due to circumstances, folk can become poor, not through carelessness but happenstance. I recall when we did not have a bed to lie on and had folks not loaned us sleeping bags, we would have slept on the floor. It was hard

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but a good lesson for afterward we appreciated every thing we got and have. Was there a danger of stealing to get food? Of course there was. This is what Agur did not want, to be so destitute that he would steal and take the name of the Lord in vain. Not only did it make us thankful but cultivated a tender heart toward others in need. "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8).

- 4) If we are going to live a life for the glory of God then we must learn to trust Him. God loves to be trusted. This is a characteristic of the life of our Lord. As a baby it could be said prophetically of Him, "Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa. 22:10); "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts" (Psa. 22:9); and when hanging on the cross, the people knowing his character said, "He trusted in God" (Matt. 27:43).
- 5) Being wealthy is not a sin. Many are the saints who have used their wealth for the furtherance of the gospel and helping those in need. However, it can also be sadly used as when the Lord has blessed a saint with ample to leave it to ungodly family members who waste it in the pursuit of sinfulness and the ignoring of God. What we have is not our own to distribute or "will" as we see fit or the world expects, for since it is not ours but the Lord's, each will have to give an account of what they did with that which was given to them.

Concluding Thoughts

May the spirit of God help us to see the wisdom of Agur and have a like passion as he had and for the same purpose.

.. . . *Rowan Jennings*