

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God: What the Whole Bible Teaches*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 2003. 220pp. \$20.00, paper.

Graeme Goldsworthy is the church's biblical theologian. Now retired from his post at Moore Theological College (Sydney, Australia), he has blessed the body of Christ with a short book on prayer that can be understood by anyone who can read. Here is a lifetime of learning distilled into simple but rich teaching on this vital aspect of the Christian life.

The book opens with an observation that we all need to hear: "Unfortunately, being told that Jesus got up a great while before sunrise in order to pray, or that Martin Luther, John Wesley and C. H. Spurgeon all regarded two hours a day spent in prayer as normal, does not seem to help most of us. On the contrary, it often tends to make us want to give up altogether" (11). Goldsworthy goes on to explain, "The simplest way of stating the danger of the exemplary approach is that it focuses on people and their deeds, and not on what God says and does" (12). The first chapter is then closed with this piercing question, "When you think about your practice of prayer and, perhaps, some of the problems you experience, do you mainly consider: what you are like as a praying Christian, or what God is like as our heavenly Father who saves us?" (19).

After thus addressing our self-centered thinking about prayer and fixing our eyes on almighty God, Goldsworthy escorts the reader into the Himalayas, directing our thoughts to the way that God exists as three persons who communicate with one another. We humans communicate, and prayer is one form of communication, because we are made in the image of this Triune God. Having considered these realities about the Trinity, the reader is next led to consider the union with Christ that believers experience. Being united to him by faith, our prayers are acceptable because of the justification he accomplished.

With these truths established, Goldsworthy takes up a profound question, "Who changes what through prayer?" (53). God's omniscience and omnipotence prompt Christians who pray to recognize the tension between Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. A helpful analogy is drawn between the Trinity (three persons, one God), the two natures of Christ (two natures, one person), and the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the human: "They are all beyond our human capacity to understand, but not beyond us to accept as what God's word teaches" (55). After these discussions of the ways that Jesus and the Father influence our prayers, the enabling role of the Spirit in prayer is dealt with. Goldsworthy thus devotes the first three chapters to developing a Trinitarian theology of prayer. Throughout we are urged to look away from ourselves to the glorious God who evokes prayer from us: "Rather than focusing on how strong our faith is, we should be more concerned about in whom we place our confidence and trust" (69).

These chapters on God the One in Three set up a biblical theological treatment that begins with the Lord's prayer. The author's deep understanding of the history of redemption makes him an able guide through the interpretive issues raised by the intricacies of the Bible. Goldsworthy explains that "Biblical theology is an approach to the Bible that seeks to allow the Bible's message about God to come through in the way the Bible tells it" (107). As Goldsworthy employs this method, the reader is swept through the history of Israel, the Psalms, and the prophets, into the New Testament. This masterful discussion opens the Bible as a Christian book,

probing the reader's heart because "the way we pray should be a reflection of the God we know. Prayer is inseparable from knowing the God who has revealed himself" (174).

This remarkable book is peppered with helpful summaries, most of which come at the end of chapters. In addition to these invaluable reinforcements, each chapter is concluded with questions that succeed in provoking reflective application of the content of the chapters. This book strikes me as being as helpful as J. I. Packer's classic *Knowing God*. May its readership be as wide and its influence as far reaching.

James M. Hamilton Jr.
SWBTS Houston