

Session 75: Making our Prayers Known

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 75).

There is another aspect of praying for others which concerns making our prayers known to them. We see that Paul did this constantly. Why would Paul include in his letters to the various churches the fact that he was praying for them? Paul did not just say, ‘I am praying for you,’ but he even told them what he was praying. Did you ever wonder why? Was Paul just trying to let them know he was thinking of them? I think not. Paul made his prayers known for a different reason than we do.

For example, let us say our friend is going through a difficult situation (perhaps the loss of a loved one) and we know they are hurting. People often say, ‘I have been praying for you,’ which is a way of recognizing they are hurting and that we are sorry for their pain. Normally, when people pray, they ask God to intervene in some way so that our friend will find some peace or comfort in their distress.

There is some measure of comfort in knowing that our friends recognize when we are hurting and that they care for us. But comparatively, that comfort is minimal to the comfort our Father wants to give us.

When we (as sons) pray, we realize that real comfort comes from the doctrine working in us. In view of that, we need to talk about our prayers for those who are educated sons versus our prayers for those who are not.

Praying for Fellow Sons

Every prayer, recorded in Paul’s epistles, was written to those who were engaged in the doctrine at some level. (Even the Corinthians were not without some knowledge.) As was already said, Paul even told the saints what his prayers were about and for them.

Prayer as a Reminder

When Paul not only revealed that he was praying for the saints but also included the substance of his prayers, that was for the purpose of bringing certain doctrinal things to the attention of other saints. In other words, Paul was either 1) reminding them of something they already knew or 2) something he was about to teach them. (More about #2 shortly.)

Now stop and think about that. Telling the saints who were enduring persecutions that he was praying for them was like Paul telling them to remember their training.

Prayer is not only about bringing doctrinal things to our own attention. Prayer is also about bringing doctrinal things to the attention of others. It cannot bring to attention those things which they do not know.

Does it not make sense that Paul was praying about things which they knew? If Paul was praying for them about things they knew nothing about, what good would that kind of prayer be – none.

The only thing to do in that case would be teach them about it so that doctrine could begin to work in them. That is the second reason for making the content of his prayers known: to introduce the doctrine.

Now let us make the practical application of this.

Suppose we talk to God about some situation in which one of our fellow saints is involved.

1. We make a determination as to what the doctrine compels us to do. (This is how the word “dwells in us richly.”)

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ¹²I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. ¹⁴Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. ¹⁵Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

2. To the best of our ability, we determine the need/needs of our fellow son. Are those needs physical or spiritual?
3. As we talk to God about the situation, we then make a godly sonship decision about how we will labor with him to help our friend. (We formulate a plan.)
4. We put that plan into action (with the understanding that what we are doing is “in the name of the Lord”).

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

To do something in someone else's name is to assert the right to act on the behalf of another. In this case, we are acting on the behalf of Christ. If the doctrine is motivating us to action, what we are doing can properly be called actions on the behalf of the Lord Jesus. This is how he lives his life in us.

We have seen movies where guards are banging on someone's door and saying to 'open up in the name of the king.' They are saying they are there on the king's orders – the king's business. That is how we should look at this except our King will be the King of kings.

These situations and this kind of praying present opportunities to put into practice our godly decision-making skills of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity.

In this case, as we pray for others, we realize we are not informing God of something which he needs to take care of. Instead, our prayers are for the purpose of getting us on the same page with him and then getting his will done.

God wants to do many things and he means for all of them to be carried out by his body. Again, this is the practice field for the heavenly places where we will actually be accomplishing his will in the heavenly places – not informing him of what we would like him to do.

As we tell people we have been praying for them, and even tell them what we have been praying, we are using our prayers to remind them of the doctrine they need to live out of in their particular situation. Just like Paul, our prayers made known to them are a reminder of their training.

Sometimes Paul prayed for the saints to get something. But he knew it would not just happen because he prayed it, but they would have to learn about it just like everything else. In that case, his prayers served as a *pre-doctrinal* exhortation to impress upon them the importance of what they were about to hear.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 76: Praying for Non-educated sons

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 76).

This brings us to the second kind of person we can pray for: one who is not informed of the doctrine. So how do we pray for someone who is expecting that God is going to miraculously intervene to deliver them from some situation of the sufferings of this present time? (The good news is they will not be under the sufferings of Christ.)

The answer to this is very similar to the issue we were just discussing.

Let us say we have a loved one who is sick and in the hospital. Can we pray for them to be healed? The answer is no.

Can we pray for them to be comforted? If we are asking God to just somehow comfort them even though they do not know the doctrine that produces that comfort, the answer is again – no.

But can we pray for them to be comforted by the doctrine? If we are willing to get involved in teaching it to them, then the answer is yes.

If we are unwilling to get involved, then we are wasting our time and we are abusing the real purpose of prayer.

Let us suppose that they reject what we have to say, what does that mean? Well, when we were praying about this situation, we were not asking God to impose something on them of which they were unfamiliar. We were not asking God to magically comfort them. What we were really talking to him about (if we were doing it properly) is determining their greatest need and then going about to meet that need. Their reaction, no matter what it is, does not impact our godly response to them out of the doctrine.

Maybe their greatest need is to be saved. If it is, what should we do? We should get the gospel to them. Do it or have it done. Talk to God about how to accomplish this.

If they are saved, then their greatest need would be some inner man issue such as the sufficiency of God's grace, the power of his word to produce peace, the promise of a glorified body, etc. If this is true for this situation, then what should we do? We have to get this information into their hands. Talk to our Father about how to do this.

But just for the sake of discussing it further, what are some ways we can do this? Show them a video that is pertinent to the issue at hand. We have notes; copy them and let them read them with the understanding that we will discuss it together. Sit down with them, tell them we know something that would benefit them, and we would like to tell them about it. Then do so. If you feel inadequate then take someone with you who can help you explain.

Maybe someone's greatest need is physical in nature; what should we do? Make a sonship decision (which means be motivated by the doctrine that is working in us) to intervene in the name of the Lord, and meet that need or devise a way to help meet it.

When we pray for others, we have to stop thinking that God is waiting for us to tell him what we would like to see him do (if it happens to be his will), and we have to start thinking that he is waiting for us to get on the same page with him so we can act on his behalf in the lives of others.

We do not tell God, God tell us. Christians today have it backwards.

We think we just tell God and it is all up to him. No, he tells us and then it is up to us to act on his behalf.

When I say 'he tells us,' I do not mean that he uses circumstances to guide us or that he whispers to us in some way. The way God tells us is by the working of his word in us which then informs us as to certain actions which we need to take. He tells us by way of the doctrine.

When we learn a form of doctrine and its godly thinking aspect is impacting our daily living and the decisions we are making, it will come into our mind in accordance with various situations and circumstances. As we are moved to act in accordance with that doctrine, it can truly be said, 'the Lord told me to help you.'

He did not tell us in the sense most people understand. Not only did he tell us (by the working of his word in us) but he is also the one doing the work through us. It really is about him in every aspect of what we do. Genuine prayer has all of this in mind no matter whom we are praying for.

While there are other things that could be included in this review on prayer, we have covered the mechanics of relationship prayer as it pertains to the mercies of God, education prayer as it pertains to our godly edification, prayer for the saints who are involved in their sonship lives, prayer for the saints who do not know about their sonship lives and finally, prayer for the lost.

Review:

Relationship Prayer

- Identify the mercy (mercies)
- Talk about your understanding
- Value and esteem it with your Father
- Love him for it
- Learn about him because of it
- Be thankful for what he has done

Adversity Prayer, Part 1 – Sufferings of this present time is:

- The doctrine of our glorification to come and its capacity to produce patience (the hope of a redeemed body) – Romans 8:18-25

How does the doctrine of our future glorification help us when we suffer the sufferings of this present time? It helps by producing patience because we know that our suffering has an eternal benefit (conforming us to the image of God’s Son).

- A glory shall be revealed in us in connection to the sufferings.
 - The creature is waiting for us.
 - The redemption of our body is our “hope.”
- The next comforting issue is:
 - The comforting ministry of the Spirit during times of perplexity – Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit also, in addition to the doctrine of our glorification and the redemption of our body, helps us with our infirmities. Evidently, he does this in response to us not knowing what to pray for as we ought.

How we become the beneficiaries of this I am not quite sure, but perhaps this is something the Spirit does in response to our heart condition.

In Romans 8:26-27, we have a statement about prayer (as it concerns our infirmities) and the Spirit somehow helping in connection with us not knowing what to pray for.

In order to best understand Romans 8:26-27, we need to understand three principles that are generally taught in the Bible and in Paul’s epistles specifically.

1. The principle to understand the purpose of prayer.

In order to see this, we are going to look at prayer in the life of Jesus Christ and then prayer in the life of Paul. Let us go back into Israel’s program first and read in Matthew 26 how prayer worked in the life of Jesus.

Matthew 26:36 *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.³⁸ Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.⁴⁰ And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.⁴² He went away again the second time, and prayed,*

saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³ *And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.* ⁴⁴ *And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* ⁴⁵ *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* ⁴⁶ *Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

In verse 39, the cup is the “cup” of his death on the cross. Jesus prays three times just as Paul prays three times in the example we will look at with him.

The progression is the interesting thing to see.

- In verse 39 (his 1st prayer) he says, “*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*”
- In verse 42 (his 2nd prayer) and in verse 44 (his 3rd prayer) he prays the same words. He says, “*O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*”

The sense of what Jesus is saying has changed in the second prayer. The 1st prayer is one of asking to let the cup pass from him. The 2nd and 3rd prayers are resigned to the fact that the cup cannot pass away from him. We can see in the prayer of verse 42 that the issue with Jesus is not his will, but the will of his Father. We also see the commitment of Jesus to discharge his Father’s will.

After the 3rd prayer, which is like the 2nd, Jesus comes again to the disciples and finds them asleep. This time, he does not wake them but lets them sleep on.

Matthew 26:44 *And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* ⁴⁵ *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

Then, in verse 46, we see that Jesus wakes everyone up.

Matthew 26:46 *Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

Jesus knows the Father’s will. He is no longer praying about it. He wakes up the disciples with the intent of ‘I have decided to fulfill my Father’s will, so let us go get this thing done.’

Look down in the passage and see something interesting. Peter is going to take out his sword to prevent the mob from taking Jesus. He swings at the servant of the high priest and cuts off his ear.

Matthew 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.⁵³ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?⁵⁴ But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

In view of these verses, the question is: did Jesus really have a choice? Was praying for his Father to send legions of angels to deliver him from being taken really an option for Jesus? Was escape from the cross really an option for him?

Some would say yes and others would say no. Actually, there are two sides to this coin. Side one, that says he did not have the option, concerns the question of can God lie? In eternity past, did Jesus Christ agree to be the sacrifice? Yes, he did. So, if he now backs out, what does that mean? It would mean God lied and that cannot be according to the scripture.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

Hebrews 6:18 *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

We can debate this issue all day but here is the truth. If Jesus had taken the option to call those angels and delivered him from the cross, then it would have changed everything that we know about him; his character and nature. We would not perceive him the way we do now.

At the beginning, especially, there seemed to be a struggle in Jesus about going to the cross. He obviously did not want to suffer the death on the cross, but at the same time, he wanted to do his Father's will. As he prayed, he came to the conclusion that he would do that which he did not want to do in order to fulfill the will of his Father.

Here are some questions. Did Jesus' praying about his circumstances change his Father's will? It did not. Did it change his circumstances? It did not. But his prayer did change something. What was it? What changed was Jesus' attitude toward his circumstances. He went from, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me," to 'Come on guys, let us go do the Father's will.' Prayer changed him. It changed his will to match the will of his Father.

Now turn to 2 Corinthians 12.

2 Corinthians 12:7 *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Paul prayed three times about the “messenger of Satan.” Once again, the change that took place by Paul’s prayer was not in God’s will or in Paul’s circumstances, but the change was in Paul.

In verse 8, Paul prayed for God to take the things away: to change the circumstance. In verse 9, Paul prayed differently:

2 Corinthians 12:9 *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

The word “rather” draws a contrast back to the previous prayer. It is a change of mind toward his circumstances. Instead of asking God to take it away, Paul decided to glory in his infirmities. Paul’s will changed as he prayed.

So the first thing to get out of our mind is that prayer is the means whereby we get God to change his mind. Get it out of our heads that prayer is the way to get God to do something he otherwise was not going to do. Get it out of our heads that prayer is how we get God to change our circumstances. Get it out of our heads that prayer is how we get God to go do things we want him to do.

Prayer is the way we align our will with our Father’s will. Prayer changes us as it activates the doctrine. That is the purpose of sonship prayer. That is the kind of prayer we are to engage in.

This is the first principle of prayer: the purpose of prayer is to change us.

Space for personal reflection and notes