

Session 28: The Ephesians 3 Prayer

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 28).

Mike incorrectly labeled and refers to this recording as Session 27 however it is Session 28.

Let us turn to Ephesians 3. This is a prayer that we should have already been reading from the start of this study. If we are going to learn to pray properly today, we will learn it from our apostle. That is the reason we are going over Paul's prayers.

Ephesians 3:14 *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Paul's prayer is that they will be strengthened where? That they will be strengthened in their "inner man." And being strengthened with might by his Spirit in our inner man is a product of what: us being in Christ, or Christ being in us? That is why the next verse talks about Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith.

When you compare this prayer with the normal prayer that you hear today in Christian's circles, what do you notice? Most of the things people pray for today are of what nature; they are about what?

But everything Paul is praying for here is of what nature; what are his requests concerning?

The first thing we are learning here is that the focus of our prayer life is on the inner man.

But here is the question. Why is that the case? Why should our prayer life be focused on things happening in our inner man instead of things happening to our outer man?

- Because that is the area where God is working.
- The inner man is the basis upon which we should live life now.

We have been designed to live our lives from the inside out – not the outside in. We are designed so that the doctrine has its impact in our inner man. The outworking of the doctrine is reflected in how our outer man behaves.

The Focus of our Prayers

Since that is the case, the inner man is the issue which should concern our prayers when we are praying for ourselves. If we are praying for someone else, our prayers should be for something to happen in their inner man.

God's intervention is always going to be in our inner man, no matter what the circumstances.

To get some details concerning this, let us turn to Ephesians 3.

According to Ephesians 3, if the Spirit is going to do something (and he is doing something), it is going to be where?

***Ephesians 3:16** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 29: The Ephesians 3 Prayer, Continued

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The Spirit of God is working today in our inner man. So, here is a question. Is praying for God to strengthen our inner man a legitimate prayer for us today? It is a legitimate prayer; Paul prayed it for the Ephesians. But it is not enough simply to ask God to strengthen our inner man and let that be the end of it.

How does the Spirit strengthen our inner man? What is the mechanical means by which our inner man is strengthened with might by his Spirit? This is accomplished by the working of God's word in our hearts.

So our prayer for us to be strengthened by the Spirit in our inner man must be accompanied by us either getting into the scriptures to learn or by recalling the doctrine we already know.

Ephesians 3:16 *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

When Paul prays for them to be strengthened with might, what is the "might?"

Oxford English Dictionary

Might: 1) the quality of being able (to do what is desired); operative power

Therefore, when God strengthens believers in their inner man, he is giving them the ability to do something or to operate in a particular way.

In this case, I think Paul is emphasizing the result of what happens in our inner man when God's word has effectually worked in us. And what is that result?

We are strengthened with the ability to withstand, to endure, to suffer, to bear, to continue, to persist in those things which would otherwise overcome us, destabilize us, make us uncertain, and cause us to be discouraged or quit.

In this case (of Ephesians 3), the reason for Paul's prayer is "for this cause," that they 'faint not at his tribulations for them.'

Ephesians 3:13 *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

Oxford English Dictionary

Faint: 1) to lose heart or courage, be afraid, become depressed, give way, flag.

What we are looking at in Ephesians 3:16 is that Paul wants them to be strengthened in their inner man; that they have the ability, or operative power to “faint not” at the tribulations they see Paul undergo. That is whole purpose behind his prayer.

Ephesians 3:13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. ¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

Paul is praying that they will be strengthened in their inner man so that the tribulations they see happening to Paul do not overwhelm them and intimidate them into quitting. So what is the doctrine designed to do? The doctrine is designed to provide an operative power – a strengthening – a might, an ability in their inner man to overcome the discouragement of tribulations. That is why Paul writes what he does in verse 20.

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Session 30: The Ephesians 3 Prayer, Continued

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Ephesians 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

And how do we get that power? Where does it come from? It comes from the word of truth. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 4 and look at this issue again.

Context for 2 Corinthians

The book of 2 Corinthians deals with the fundamental sufferings of Christ in phase two of the policy of evil's attack on the messenger.

Brief Outline of 2 Corinthians:

1. 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 – Introductory issues
2. 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17 – Categories 1 & 2 of the suffering of Christ
3. 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6 – Categories 3 & 4 of the suffering of Christ
4. 2 Corinthians 4:7-9:15 – Categories 5 & 6 of the suffering of Christ
5. 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:14 – Categories 7 & 8 of the suffering of Christ

The one we want to focus on is the fourth section of the book.

Overall, 2 Corinthians 4:7-9:15 is about the sufferings of Christ (SoC) as they pertain to the offensiveness of Paul's ministry. Altogether, there are four issues set forth by which Paul's ministry is criticized; all of which form the basis for an argument to reject Paul, his message, and his ministry.

This section is divided into two major parts:

1. 2 Corinthians 4:7-7:3 – The first three offensive issues of Paul's ministry.
2. 2 Corinthians 7:4-9:15 – The fourth offensive issue of Paul's ministry.

The first section is divided into four parts:

1. 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:8 – Offensive issue #1 and its remedy
2. 2 Corinthians 5:9-12 – Offensive issue #2 and its remedy
3. 2 Corinthians 5:13-6:2 – Offensive issue #3 and its remedy
4. 2 Corinthians 6:3-7:3 – Extended remedy for all three offenses

The one we are interested in is the first part: 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:8.

This first part is divided into five subparts:

1. 2 Corinthians 4:7 – The offense and the grace that answers it.
2. 2 Corinthians 4:8-12 – The “lovely” things which must be understood about the privilege of God’s grace unto us.
3. 2 Corinthians 4:13-15 – The role of Paul’s example to us in this.
4. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – The effectual working of the abundant grace so as to endure verse 10.
5. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 – The effectual working of the abundant grace so as to endure verse 11.

2 Corinthians 4:6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

Paul is accused of having an offensive and objectionable ministry because it brings about affliction, grief, and suffering. It makes it look like God wants his people to suffer. Therefore, it is considered objectionable, and offends in that it appears weak, lacking any demonstration of God’s power and strength to intervene and stop the sufferings.

And what is this power for? The power is not the power to remove any sufferings or alleviate afflictions. Rather, it is a power that works within us to keep us from being overwhelmed by the sufferings, grief, and afflictions.

These next verses are meant to explain to us about the privilege of how God’s grace works in the midst of adversities.

2 Corinthians 4:8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. ¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

Did you notice how Paul talks about the ‘life of Jesus might be made manifest in our flesh?’ Is that ‘us in Christ’ or ‘Christ in us’ issue? Is this something we automatically received when we trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior or is this something that needs to produce in us by the doctrine? This is a ‘Christ in us’ issue.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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