

Session 4: Sonship Prayer – The Spirit Helps our Infirmities

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 4)

(Disregard comments about page numbers on recording – has been corrected in notes.)

In our previous session, we saw the natural flow of the doctrine that pertains to our sufferings. We learned:

- We are joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him.
- Our proper response to our sufferings produces a glory which the sufferings are not worthy to be compared to.
- We have a hope: the redemption of our bodies.

I want to pause here to redefine hope. Before, we said that our hope was the confident expectation of God's promise. That is okay, but I do not think that it actually contains all the details of what is in our hope.

Our new definition:

Hope: the comforting expectation of a sure and certain remedy.

This new definition contains a couple of new bits of information. The hope is supposed to aid us in some way in connection with our sufferings; the bondage of corruption we are all under. The way this aids us is to bring us comfort in the midst of these sufferings.

The second bit of new information is to talk about our hope as a remedy. In other words, our hope is the prospect of God's fixing some kind of problem. Therefore, when we have a hope, our proper response to that hope produces a comfort that God is going to remedy some condition. And that hope is meant to 'save' us in the sense of keeping us from being overwhelmed by some condition or circumstance.

Romans 8:23 *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

In verse 26 we learn that we have another form of help when it comes to our inability to handle sufferings.

Oxford English Dictionary

Infirmities: 1) weakness or lack of strength; lack of power to do something; inability, 2) physical weakness, debility, frailty, feebleness of body.

***Romans 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us...*

How does the Spirit help us?

The “intercession” Paul mentioned there was not some kind of prayer that the Spirit was praying. Intercession can indeed be prayer, but in this case it was not. Prayer is not the only way that one can intervene.

Oxford English Dictionary

Intercession: 1) the action of interceding

Intercede: 3b) to come in so as to affect, modify or prevent a result, action, etc.

In this case, the intercessory ministry of the Spirit is to prevent us from not praying properly (as we ought) and to affect prayer, as it should be.

The Spirit will effect that change in our prayer life by teaching us from the word of truth.

First of all, if we are not praying the way we ought to pray, then the solution is for us to learn how to pray properly, especially as it pertains to our sufferings. How is it that we are going to learn to pray properly as adopted sons? We will have to be taught.

That is exactly what the Spirit is doing: teaching us. He is teaching us about everything including how to pray and is the intercession which is made by the Spirit!

Verse 14 was talking about this when it said, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God...” He is leading us to learn everything we need in order to become, in actuality, all that we have been made to be in Christ. And how does the Spirit do that: by the working of his word in our inner man.

To make intercession means to intervene, in this case, between what we do not know and what we ought to know. The Spirit is interceding between us, and our lack of knowledge by leading us/teaching us what we do not know.

The normal way to pray is to ask God to take away whatever the issue of suffering is. This is what Paul thought too before he was instructed by the Lord.

***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.*

Paul did just what most folks would do; he asked God to take the thing away.

Session 5: Sonship Prayer – The Spirit Helps our Infirmities, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 5)

What was God’s response to Paul’s prayer to remove his suffering three times?

2 Corinthians 12:9 *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

The power (strength) of God’s grace is made perfect in our weaknesses. In other words, God’s grace is made manifest as to just what strength it possesses. Our weakness is the stage on which God’s grace is put on display. The fact that it is “made perfect” means it is shown to be complete in that *it is all we need!* His grace is sufficient; we do not need anything else. If we did need something else then it would not be sufficient.

Philippians 4:6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

(14:48 minute aside – no notes).

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Now take a look at Paul’s response.

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. 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.*

What does Paul mean when he says “for Christ’s sake?”

Oxford English Dictionary

Sake: out of consideration for; because of (something regarded in the light of an end, aim, purpose, etc.); often out of desire for, in order to attain, etc.

What do we desire? We desire to be conformed to the image of God's Son. What is the purpose of taking pleasure in infirmities instead of complaining about them? The aim is that the power of Christ may rest upon us. The end is that the power of God's grace be put on display; that Christ may be glorified through our weakness.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 6: Sonship Prayer – The Spirit Helps our Infirmities, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 6)

The way in which that gets accomplished is by the Spirit leading us through forms of doctrine in God's word; (the same word over which he superintended, inspired and recorded for this very purpose of our edification); his intercessory work on our behalf, in response to our proper response to his leading

Romans 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

The groaning in verse 26 is picking up on the groaning in verse 23.

Romans 8:23 *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

How did it describe the groaning as we wait for the redemption of our bodies? We groan “within ourselves.” Notice it did not just say we “groan.” If it said that, it might indicate that these are outward groanings, audible groanings but they are “within ourselves.” That does not mean that we might not express them outwardly. That is not what the verse is focusing on. What does it mean to groan within ourselves?

Oxford English Dictionary

Groan: 1b) to groan inwardly, in oneself, in the spirit, with the heart 6) to express earnest longing by groans; to yearn or long

A question about verse 23: was the inward groaning one of pain, or one of the hearts, longing for the redemption of the body? I tend to think that it was the latter because the verse said that it was ‘waiting for the redemption of our body.’ Hence, it was longing and yearning for it. That was the groan. Since it was a groan “within ourselves” it was not that outward groan of pain or grief; it was an inward longing for the redemption of the body.

When we got to verse 26, what were these groanings about? First of all, the groanings were not something the Spirit was doing; the groanings were not the Spirit's way of making intercession.

Again, those are our hearts' longing and yearning to know how to handle the sufferings we endure; how to pray the way we ought to pray as sons. The groanings of verse 26 were our hearts' desire to be taught and instructed about the issue of our sufferings and the right way to pray in connection with them. Those groanings are “within ourselves” which is why verse 26

said they “cannot be uttered.” Those are not audible groans, but our heart’s desire to know what to pray for and how to deal with our infirmities.

The next verse talks about our hearts.

***Romans 8:27** And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

The Lord searches our hearts looking to see if we are thinking about this the same way the Spirit does. Does our heart line up with the mind of the Spirit? For that is what the Lord is looking. And how does the Spirit think about this? What is the “mind of the Spirit” with regard to our sufferings and our prayers? The mind of the Spirit is revealed in God’s word because, as the verse said, what the Spirit is doing is according to the will of God.

Just as verse 16 said that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit about us being the children of God, verse 27 was talking about us bearing witness with God’s Spirit about how to handle our sufferings. He searches our hearts to see if we do.

As I have taught you before, I do not think these are the groanings (yearnings and longings) of the Spirit. The intercession is the Spirits. The groaning are ours. What are we earnestly yearning for and longing for? Answer: to know what to pray for as we ought and to know how to deal with our infirmities. That is what is supposed to be in our hearts and that is what the Father is searching for in us.

That covers the review of what we had in Sonship Prayer.

I want to discuss with you how prayer is a vital, non-optional component of the effectual working of the word in us. I hope what I am about to say is already clear to everyone, but just in case, let me say it anyway: we all need to be taught how to pray, because prayer is a vital part of our education and edification.

The Bible records the fact that John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. And the same is true for us; our apostle needs to teach us how to pray.

Why do we need to be taught how to pray?

1. Because, according to our apostle, we do not know what to pray for as we ought.
2. Because as Gentiles, we will never figure prayer out on our own.

The fact that we are Gentiles means there are some things that are true about all of us. Being Gentiles means that we are, by nature very, very superstitious. By nature we have a wrong thinking about God which needs to be corrected if we are going to talk properly to our heavenly Father.

1 Corinthians 1:22 *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

The Gentiles (Greeks) seek after wisdom, but what kind of wisdom are they looking for?
Answer: man's wisdom – the wisdom of this world.

Gentiles are naturally very impressed with man's wisdom. Therefore, we Gentiles tend to pull that wisdom into our thinking, the result being that our prayers are not based on God's wisdom, they are based on man's wisdom. Not only do we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but we must be taught, for we will never figure it out on our own. We do not have the right kind of thinking, the right kind of wisdom in us.

Ephesians 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

If you do not recall, let me remind us that our "in Adam" status with regard to our abomination was our following "the course of this world." In the new identity we received when we trusted Jesus Christ is having been "adopted sons of God" in our sanctification.

In Adam (Abomination)

Servants of sin
Free from righteousness
Course of this world

In Christ (Sanctification)

Dead to sin
Alive unto God
Adopted sons of God

The one I am most interested in right now is the last one in the list under 'In Adam.' Looking again at Ephesians 2:1, when we as Gentiles walked according to the course of this world, our walk and our thinking were according to whom? Before we were saved, we were "the children of disobedience." According to Ephesians 2:2, who's spirit was working in the children of disobedience? Answer: Satan's, the prince of the power of the air. Therefore, which was working in us: the truth or the lie? It was the lie.

Ephesians 2:3 *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Thus, when lost Gentiles prayed, it was to the wrong god. Even when a Gentile was saved and was praying to the true God, because of what was in his mind (thinking), he was still praying the wrong way. Since we are talking about our thinking, turn with me to Ephesians 4 and look at what Paul says about this issue of the Gentiles having wrong thinking.

Ephesians 4:17 *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the*

understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

What is going on in the mind of an unsaved person? That is to what the word vanity is referring. They are empty-headed and empty hearted of the truth. It is not that they have no thoughts; of course they do. The problem is that their thoughts are not like God's. Their understanding is darkened.

Therefore, when it comes to being a son, what is the first thing God fixes with his sons and daughters? What is the first component of godliness? It is that first component of godliness that fixes our ungodly thinking.

Now let us look at a scenario. Here is man who gets saved. He knows the elements of the gospel, but the rest of what he knows is still the same, as he knew before he got saved. So how is he likely to pray? He is likely to pray out of what he knew before he was saved. He is praying out of ignorance.

The point I am making here is not that God will be angry with that guy for praying out of the only knowledge he has; he will not. The point is that we need to be taught about prayer because we have wrong information in our minds.

John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. Jesus' disciples came to him and asked him to teach them to pray.

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

We also need to learn how to pray. Before we are taught, we still have our understanding darkened (Ephesians 4:18); we still have the old thought patterns. What do we have to do? We have to do what Paul writes in verse 23.

Ephesians 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Space for personal reflection and notes