

Session 13: Sonship Prayer – How God’s Power Works Today

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 13)

Last time we started discussing the 5 ways in which God empowers us in our inner man and covered: saving power and sustaining power.

3. Enduring Power

Now, there is a third power that is available for those who believe and it is a power that believers actually deny themselves. It is a power which is in connection with the “hope of his calling” recorded in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1.

***Ephesians 1:16** Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: ¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

Many commentators today believe that the “hope of his calling” is talking about heaven in our future. Well, we do have a *heavenly hope* which we eagerly await. But this is not what “the hope of his calling” is about. Neither is Paul praying for the Ephesian saints to understand that they are going to heaven one day, for they already understand that. They already understand they will inherit the heavenly places.

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul is referring to praying for them to have the spirit of wisdom in connection to the revelation of a particular “hope” to which we believers are ‘called’ by God to participate in. And what is it that we are called to?

If we are believers in Jesus Christ, who have made the cry of Abba, Father, and have committed ourselves to becoming sons and daughters who are being conformed to the image of God’s Son, then it is “given” that we “suffer for his sake.”

***Philippians 1:29** For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

That suffering will sometimes come from outside the body of Christ and outside our local assemblies. Other times, it will come from within the body of Christ and within a local assembly. But the good news is that God possesses and makes available a power which works in the inner man of every believer, who suffers for Christ’s sake, the ability to endure it to God’s glory.

2 Timothy 1:8 *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;*

Notice that Paul said to Timothy to be a “partaker of the afflictions of the gospel” but how did he say to do that? He said “according to the power of God.”

God gives us the inward strength (the power) to endure this kind of suffering circumstance. Again, there is nothing physical in this. This power works in us to produce a patient endurance of these kinds of sufferings so that:

- We do not change our message.
- We are not intimidated into silence.
- We are not ashamed (of being discredited).

We will suffer opposition to the gospel of the grace of God. This will include things from:

- Those who accuse us of easy-believism.
- Those who contradict our gospel message by teaching the necessity of baptism in order to be saved.
- Those who disparage our ‘by grace alone through faith alone’ message and insist on works of some kind to be saved.
- Those who proclaim works of some kind are necessary in order to remain saved.
- Opposition to the permanency of our saved status.
- Opposition to the doctrines of the mystery (such as right division, Paul’s unique apostleship, proper prayer, the hope of his calling, etc.).

But there is something else. Not only is it a ‘given’ that we will suffer for his sake, but we will also endure the same kind of sufferings that every other person in the world suffers because they live in a fallen world. As a believer, we will not be protected from getting sick, from injuring ourselves, from needing glasses or hearing aids, from various diseases, from needing surgeries, and on and on the list goes.

In other words, we will suffer the same kind of physical distresses that an unbeliever today face. But the good news for us is that there is a power, available only to believers, which enable us to patiently endure all of the sufferings no matter what kind they are.

This power is the one power of God that believers do not want. They would much rather believe that God will either keep those things from happening to us, or, if they do come upon us, then he will take those things away. What most believers do not fully comprehend is that God means to be glorified by the way in which we handle those various sufferings. But he is not just glorified because we suffer (which is why the “if so be that we suffer with him” is so critical to understand

in Romans 8), but rather he is glorified in this dispensation of Gentile grace in the way in which we handle it as we utilize the particular power he makes available to us for these sufferings.

This power enables us to patiently endure the things we suffer. It may be some kind of persecution because of the message. But no matter what those persecutions may be, God has a power that keeps us from quitting or perverting the message or being silenced.

This is the same power which enable us to patiently endure physical ailments such as contracting some dread disease. No matter what kind of suffering we may encounter, God has a power which enables us to endure that suffering in a way that reflects his work in our inner man.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Wait, what is renewed? Not our outward man, but our inward man. God has the power to renew our inward man day by day. That power is not manifested in our body, in the physical realm, but it is manifested in the inner man, in the invisible realm.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

As we can see, the physical things which people want God to do, those things are temporal (temporary). God is interested in doing the things that are eternal and those are the things which are not seen because they are in our inner man. Because of that, we are strengthened where? We are strengthened in the inward man because that is where the power of God is working.

So, this third power is the power to endure suffering, or enduring power.

Space for personal reflection and notes

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Session 14: Sonship Prayer – How God’s Power Works Today, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 14)

4. Sanctifying Power

Just for the record, the last two powers have to do with inner man issues as well. The fourth power is a sanctifying power by which we will be presented blameless before God. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.)

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.

The point to make is that this power is, like all the others in this dispensation of Gentile grace, working in our inner man and not in the outward circumstances.

5. Stabilizing Power

The fifth power, stabilizing power (Romans 16:2,5) is only at work in our inner man and changes nothing about our situation or circumstances.

Romans 16:25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

But I want to back up and springboard off of something I just said about God’s sanctifying power because this is going to take us where we need to go.

Look with me again at God’s sanctifying power.

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. ²⁴ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

God will preserve us blameless.

The “body” mentioned here is not referring to our glorified body which we will get one day in the future, but it is talking about the body that we have right now.

How can God see a saint, who still sins, as being perfectly holy? You may be tempted to answer the question by saying that our unredeemed body can be preserved blameless because of the

imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; by making us part of him who is perfectly holy, by placing us into the person of Christ.

But the issue of being holy is not a justification issue. It is a sanctification issue. It is true that when we trust Christ, everything that belongs to Christ becomes ours, but that is only in a positional sense.

We are, before God, as positionally holy as we will ever be. That is not to say that the outworking of the sanctification we received when you trusted Christ is as much as it will ever be; that just is not true. (Or, at least, it better not be true, or else we have not matured much.) We are asked to set ourselves apart unto holiness, which means that while we are positionally as holy as we will ever be, we are not as practically holy as we will ever be. Christ is as holy as we can get, not just positionally but also practically holy: functionally holy. And even though he is functionally holy, it does not mean we are. So in that sense, it is not true that everything that Christ has now we have as well. But, we have been given everything (we are complete in him – Colossians 2) that we need in order to become functionally holy.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 15: Sonship Prayer – How God’s Power Works Today, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 15)

The point here is that there is a sanctifying power that works in us to such an extent so as to present even our unredeemed body blameless. That is definitely an inner man issue.

We have seen five ways in which our apostle explains how the various aspects of God’s power are put into effect for us:

1. Saving power
2. Sustaining power
3. Enduring power
4. Sanctifying power
5. Stabilizing power

As you can see, these are all manifested in the inward man and not in the outward circumstances.

Therefore, when we pray for God’s power to be at work in us, we should be praying about those things which should be in our inner man; whereby, we can endure sufferings, or we are stabilized in a difficult situation, etc.

For example: When we are in the midst of a stressful situation which is causing us to worry and be anxious, we may want God to give us peace about what is happening so we are not so overcome by the worry of it. Instead of praying for God to give us peace, we should be praying about that doctrine which produces peace, because peace is a by-product of knowing something. And, of course, in order to know about that doctrine, we must understand the doctrine, we must believe the doctrine, and we must reckon it by living out of that doctrine. The power of God which is resident in that doctrine, along with the work of the Holy Spirit who is in us then works to produce a peace “that passeth understanding.”

The situation may not have changed at all, but the knowledge contained in the doctrine is what keeps our hearts and minds so that we are not overcome by those things which make us “full of care.”

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.

The “things” in this passage which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report are not just any sorts of things that are true, honest, just, etc. They are things which concern the mercies of God (the benefits of being ‘in Christ’) and the doctrine working in us, which is the issue of Christ being ‘in us.’ Those are the things we are to think about and should occupy our thinking. Those are the things which produce a peace in the midst of troubling circumstances.

I say this not to attempt to teach Philippians before we finish Romans, but to give you an example of why we do not simply pray for God to give us peace in our hearts, but we realize that peace is a by-product of the effectual working of Philippians 4:6-9. When we need peace, instead of praying for peace, we pray about those things which we already possess in Christ. By doing so, we remind ourselves of what they are and what they do for us, We pray for those things which the doctrine has produced in us. By doing so, we remind ourselves of what we possess as Christ is being formed in us. But what if that doctrine has not yet worked in us? What if there is an area in which we have not yet learned to ‘put on Christ?’ What should we do?

We begin to learn it so it can do its effectual work in us. If it is a doctrine that requires other previous doctrines to be in us first, we do the work which is at hand while we patiently wait until we can properly come to the doctrine we need.

Think about it this way. A person is going through a difficult situation or having to make a difficult decision. They hear about sonship and how it can help them. But, as they are first starting out, they are not yet ready to jump right into the advanced doctrine. They need that doctrine to be built upon a foundation which they do not yet possess. But instead of despairing that they cannot get a ‘quick fix,’ they must go from where they are until they advance through the doctrine to the place they need to be. Yes, some things are going to be tougher because they just are not advanced enough yet, but there is “hope” that help is coming by way of the doctrine.

The First of Two Questions

Now that we have looked at the issue of the power of God, we move to the second issue of the two questions. Remember, we are talking about some of the foundational issues regarding prayer.

This second issue is going to come in the form of answering two questions, but first, the verses.

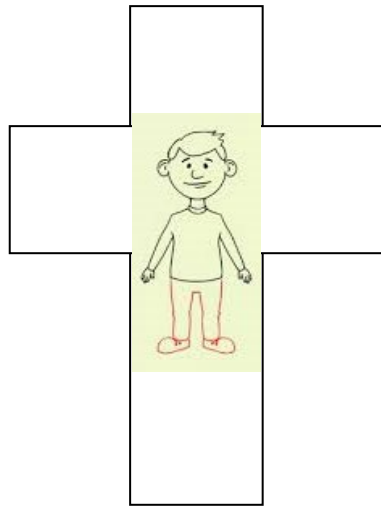
1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

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.

These are just two of the verses that set forth the truth that when we trusted Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient Savior, we were placed “in Christ.” We were made to be “in Christ” by an action of the Spirit.

With that being said, here is the question. Why did God place us “in Christ” in response to our faith in his Son?

Every good thing God has done for us was given to us “in Christ.”



- **Salvation** from the debt and penalty of sin is, and can only be, obtained “in Christ” because he was the only one qualified to, and capable of, providing redemption. He was sinless and did not need saving; only such a one could provide it for another.
- **Eternal life** is only obtained “in Christ.” He is the only one who possesses eternal life, and because everyone else deserves death, the only way to have eternal life is to be ‘in him.’ We will never have it apart from him, on our own.
- **Forgiveness** is only “in Christ” because, as the only one who did not need it, he provided for it.

This is why, even though Christ died for the sins of the whole world, the whole world is not saved simply because he paid for their sins. The benefit of forgiveness is only found ‘in him.’ He made the payment and the payment is sufficient, but the forgiveness is only found “in Christ.” Until you are in Christ, you do not get any of the “mercies of God.”

We get to thinking that what he did was put on us out here (so to speak). In reality, all of those things were in him and the only way we get them is to be placed in Christ.

- To be made righteousness is only possible by being in Christ; he alone was righteous. This is why we get his righteousness, not some version of our own, for we do not have any.
- Peace with God is only in Christ because only he was never an enemy of God; only he was in the will of God constantly. Because we were enemies of God on our own, we cannot have peace with God outside of Jesus Christ.
- Being made “dead to sin” is only possible in Christ. Without our old man being “crucified with Christ,” our old “servant” relationship to sin could not be broken for as long as we live. Christ was never a servant to sin. Therefore, in him is the only place anyone can share in that. We can share in that because our old man was put to death: severing the old relationship with sin.
- We can only be “alive unto God” by being “in Christ.” There is no other way. All of us are naturally “free from righteousness” and the only remedy to that status is found in the only man who never was unrighteous.
- Our adoption is only possible in Christ. We must be in Christ before we can be adopted. We must be in Christ before the cry of Abba Father means anything. We must be in Christ in order to be dealt with as an adopted, adult son.
- The Spirit is only given to those who are in Christ.
- Only “in Christ” do we have a new identity.
- Only “in Christ” are we eternally secure.
- Only in Christ can we produce a righteousness that is acceptable to God. Any and all “righteousness” outside of Christ is the self-righteous efforts of the flesh.

While you can list more than the few things I have listed here (i.e. we are accepted in the beloved; we enjoy the love of God which nothing can separate us from), the important thing is to know that they are all found “in Christ.”

Additionally, every good thing God intends for us to have in the future will be given to us “in Christ.

- Our glorified body will be given to us only on the basis of our being “in Christ.”
- Our vocation in the creature is only for those who are in Christ.
- The heirs of God inheritance are only for those who are in Christ.

If you recall, before we pick up the last major reason we do not know what to pray for as we ought, we were setting some groundwork for the mechanics of sonship prayer. That groundwork was going to be done in the form of answering two questions We have answered the first question. What does it mean for us to be “in Christ;” why did God put us in Christ?

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