

Session 34: Interpreting Events as God's Answer to Prayer

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 34).

I told you there were several issues that needed to be brought up. The missing component of the common way of praying is the first and now let us look at the second.

Attitudes from the Common Understanding of Prayer

1. When someone learns about sonship prayer and the fact that God is not intervening in the physical circumstances of life, there is a thinking that comes out of that which says: if God is not giving us a job or changing the weather (or anything else of the physical, material, fleshly things most prayers consist of), then why pray?

This is revealing as it points to the impression that prayer is simply the mechanism by which we get God to do things. If that is all prayer really is, then this conclusion to not pray might be valid. But Paul tells us to pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing.*

Romans 12:12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*

In view of those exhortations, either: 1) Paul wants us to engage in a futile exercise of prayer, or 2) God really is granting the requests for jobs, weather, and the like, (here is the big one we are after) or, 3) prayer is about something more than merely asking God to do the things that we want to see done.

As you might expect, the last one is the correct answer. That is the key to the missing ingredient of sonship prayer.

Even though we know not to pray for rain, for a job, for traveling mercies, or for health; even though we know that all of Paul's prayers were about spiritual things which take place in the inner man, our continued clumsiness in prayer stems from our continued thinking that prayer is fundamentally about asking God to go do things.

But when we understand prayer properly, we will see that this erroneous idea stems from the common understanding of what prayer is and how it works.

Now go to the book of Philippians for a bit. This book is full of Paul's prayers. In Philippians, we are going to see salvation being worked out in a number of different settings. That is what

prayer is designed to do. Prayer is designed to take the doctrine we are learning and manifest it in the midst of our circumstances.

Oxford English Dictionary

Manifest: to make evident to the eye or to the understanding; to show plainly, disclose, reveal.

Let us say it again: prayer is designed to take the doctrine we are learning and manifest it in the midst of our circumstances.

In that way, prayer activates the doctrine.

Romans 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 35: The Impact of Paul's Prayer

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 35).

Paul says in Philippians 1:3-4 that he has been praying for the Philippians.

As we see how Paul prays in accordance with this dispensation of Gentile grace, we will learn from him how we should be praying today.

The other 2 request(s) references used by Paul:

Philippians 1:4 *Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,*

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.*

In verse 9, we get to the specifics of part of what Paul has been praying.

Philippians 1:9 *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; ¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

Verse 9 begins with Paul praying that their love may abound more and more in what? Notice, it is “in knowledge and in all judgment.” Why does Paul pray for that?

He prays for that so that two things might happen with the Philippians:

1. That they may approve things which are excellent.
2. That they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Let us step aside to look briefly at that second issue. In view of what we have already studied in this review on prayer, especially as we looked at the various kinds of inner-man powers that Paul says God is exhibiting today in this dispensation of Gentile grace, that last phrase in verse 10 ought to bring something to our remembrance. Does it? Does another verse come into your mind when you read this? Do you recall the *sanctifying power* that we covered a few weeks back?

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.*

What was the issue of being “preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?”

This is the same issue as Paul prayed for the Philippians, that their love may abound in knowledge and in all judgment so that they may be “sincere and without offense til the day of Christ.” That is the way Paul described it to the Philippians.

To the Thessalonians, he described it as their whole spirit and soul and body being “preserved blameless” unto the coming of the Lord Jesus.

These are not the first times Paul talks about this issue. Take a look at what Paul writes to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you a question. Is being blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus a Christ in us issue or is it an us in Christ issue? We have already covered the Thessalonians verse as a Christ in us issue. So what about the Philippians verse; which is it? Look at it again.

Philippians 1: 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Paul’s prayer does not say that they are, but he prays that they “may be...” This is not the certainty of it automatically being given to us in Christ. (Look, do not get me wrong here, we are complete in Christ, there is no doubt about that. But that does not mean that once you trust Christ as your Savior, there is no more work to be done in your inner man. You may be complete in Christ but the work he wants to accomplish in us is not completed. That is what I am referring to here.)

If that work has already been done to its fullest extent, then why would Paul come along and say that believers need to “come unto a perfect man, unto the stature of the fullness of Christ?” It sounds to me as though there are things that still need to be accomplished in us.

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Session 36: Position versus Function

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 36).

Yes, we are just as Colossians 2:10 says: “And ye are complete in him...” but that does not mean that every believer already knows everything he needs to know; that every believer understands all of the doctrine; that every form of doctrine has effectually worked in every believer; that every believer has yielded his members as instruments of righteousness unto God; that every believer has grown up into Christ (Ephesian 4:15); that every believer has put off the old man; that every believer has been renewed in the spirit of their mind; that every believer is operating out of godly love and charity or a hundred other issues that have to do with Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith.

Understanding this issue is one of the reasons we went through the difference between us being in Christ and Christ being in us. Being in Christ is an accomplished fact which makes us complete so that Christ can be formed in us: a process which is not yet complete. Get it?

That is why there are two inheritances (or one inheritance with two parts). The heir of God inheritance is based on us being in Christ. The joint-heir inheritance is based on Christ in us.

The heir of God inheritance is not based on our service; it is based on what Christ accomplished and gives to us automatically because we are ‘in him.’ The joint-heir inheritance is based on our service which stems from Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith.

Colossians 3:23 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*²⁴ *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

Notice the passage starts with “whatsoever ye do.” So the context is about something we do. Actually, the context goes beyond these few verses. Look back up to verse 16.

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.*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.*

Verse 16, we have already covered. It is the word of truth that effectually works in us that ‘dwells in [us] richly,’ and then look what follows in verse 17:

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.*

The context is about what we are doing. So what does it mean to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus? Does this mean we just attach Jesus’ name to whatever we do and now we have God’s stamp of approval? Certainly not. Or should I say, “God forbid.”

The way we ‘do anything in the name of the Lord Jesus’ is by the word of Christ dwelling in us. In other words, when the word has effectually worked in us to produce godly thinking, then as we live out of that word, we live out of the godly thinking; that is what it means to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” because his word is dwelling in us producing his life in us. When that happens we are not only being conformed to the image of God’s Son, but we are blameless (Corinthians, Thessalonians); we are sincere and without offence (Philippians)!

Can you see how this issue moves from being part of our “simple son” education, to our “wise man” education, all the way to our “man of understanding” education?

But getting back to Colossians 3:23, Paul exhorts them: whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. Remember this follows the word of Christ dwelling in them so that whatever they do they do in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Once again, how do we do anything “heartily, as to the Lord?” This describes everything we do as a result of the word dwelling in us richly, as a result of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, as a result of Christ being formed in us, as a result of the life of Jesus being made manifest in our mortal bodies, as a result of us being conformed to the image of God’s Son, etc.

And again in verse 23:

Colossians 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Why does Paul say to do this? Verse 24 has the answer.

Colossians 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Whatsoever we do, we do “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” we do it “as to the Lord and not unto men” because we know something; “that of the Lord [we] shall receive the reward of the inheritance.” And on what basis do we get that reward? Is it simply based on the fact that we are in Christ? No, it is not. It is based on our godly service, according to Paul. And by that I do not mean to say that we get rewarded for doing a bunch of good stuff or being sacrificial, or anything like that. It is based on our godly service which means the things we do in our everyday lives stem from, and is a byproduct of, the word dwelling in us richly so that all of things we do actually are “in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

And I would like to add that according to this verse, that “reward of the inheritance” would not be the same for everyone.

***Colossians 3:24** Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

The reward of the inheritance (our joint-heir inheritance) is given based on our service. But let us make sure we can define what Paul is talking about when he says, “for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Our “service” is not limited some particular area of ministry. Our “service” applies to everything we do in our daily lives as a result of the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, as a result of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, as a result of Christ being formed in us, as a result of the effectual working of God’s word in our inner man.

***Philippians 1:9** And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

Being “without offense” reminds us of being presented “blameless” does it not? And notice what follows their being “without offence.”

***Philippians 1:11** Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

When the word dwells in us, we are sincere and without offence and we are “being filled with the fruits of righteousness,” which is exactly what we were being taught back in Romans 6.

Oxford English Dictionary

Fruit: the result or reward of a work or activity.

Fruits are the results, the consequences, and the outcomes of something else: in this case, righteousness.

***Philippians 1:11** Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

If the fruits of righteousness are “by Jesus Christ,” then what does that mean? It means that he is the One who is filling us with those fruits of righteousness.

If fruits are the result of an activity, and that activity is “by Jesus Christ” and his activity is “filling us” with those fruits (results), then the fruits of righteousness are the results of Jesus Christ living his life in us.

What are these “fruits?” What are the results of Jesus Christ living his life in us? Some of the results of Jesus living his life in us are:

- Our love will increasingly abound in knowledge and judgment.

***Philippians 1:9** And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;*

I want to say a word about love. We think of love as an emotion: a feeling. That is not what Paul means. The love here is talking about actions which are based on decisions; decisions that stem from the word of truth working in us. Love is thinking about the doctrine and then acting on it: living out of it.

The more we abound (increase) in our knowledge of the word, the more our love can abound, which is to say, the more wisdom we have is in order to make godly decisions and godly judgments. Get it? That is how our love abounds. It is not about us getting stronger emotions about someone; it is about acting in accordance with God’s love which is us making decisions and living out of the working of his word in us.

- We will approve things which are excellent.

***Philippians 1:10** That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

What does it mean to “approve things which are excellent?” Again, this is one of those words which has more than one meaning. Commonly, it means to accept as satisfactory. But in this case, it refers to the secondary meaning of the word.

Oxford English Dictionary

Approve: to prove, to show

What does it mean to “prove” something?

Crabb’s

Prove: to make a thing known; manifest; to openly put something to the test

***Luke 14:19** And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.*

The fruits (results) of righteousness (which are a byproduct of Jesus Christ living his life in us) are that we manifest (or put on display) ‘excellent things,’ making them visible for all to see. Among those ‘excellent things’ are “the power of his grace” and “the manifold wisdom of God.”

- We will be “without offense” before God.

Philippians 1:10 *That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

- We will be presented “blameless in spirit, soul and body.”
- We will patiently endure the suffering of this present time.
- We will be “more than conquerors” when it comes to the suffering of Christ.
- We will not faint at our tribulations.

The following list is out of the scriptures but we have not covered them yet, so I am not giving a reference, only listing them.

- We will not be ashamed of those who are suffering for the truth.
- We will be persuaded that God will do what he says he will do.
- We will be persuaded that God’s word will produce what it was designed to produce.
- We will be partakers of the afflictions of Christ.
- We will be partakers of God’s grace.
- We will stand fast in one spirit (unity) in the face of those who seek to divide the assembly.
- We will not be terrified by our enemies, but our afflictions will cause others to wax confident, speaking the word boldly without fear.
- We will not have a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.
- We will, in whatsoever state we are in, be content.

(Did you notice that all of the things in our list are *inner man* items?)

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