

Session 49: Prayer is Different under Grace

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 49).

Leviticus 26:40 *If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; ⁴¹ And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: ⁴² Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.*

2 Chronicles 7:13 *If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; ¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

Daniel 9:4 *And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; ⁵ We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: ⁶ Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

Daniel 9:11 *Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. ¹² And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.*

The point of us looking at this issue is so we understand there is no need for us to confess our sins in order to be in right standing before God. “In Christ,” our forgiveness is complete; our

sins are completely dealt with. There is no law in force that demands a prayer of confession and acts of repentance. We are under grace.

Romans 4:5 *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁷ Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

Ephesians 1:7 *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Ephesians 4:32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Colossians 2:13 *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

We do not “confess” our sins in order to be in right standing with God. Our standing in Christ is perfect and complete.

When we rightly divide the word, then we understand that 1 John 1:9 is for the members of the remnant in Daniel’s 70th week and applies much the same way that it did in the Old Testament.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

This is not forgiveness of sins which saves them or justifies them. This is an admonition for members of the remnant who are already saved. This is an instruction of confessing in order to be in right standing before God. Their right standing is contingent upon confessing and turning from their sins; our standing in Christ is not dependent upon anything we do.

But we need to straighten out a confusing issue that comes from not understanding some verses properly, such as the one in Matthew that we were looking at last time.

Matthew 6:9 *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. ¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

We are going to focus on those last two verses because those are where the error comes in. It is not unusual for preachers to talk about these verses as though they pertain to salvation; the

forgiveness of sins that saves. Many preachers who believe we are saved by grace believe that Israel was saved by faith and works. That is not true.

Before we hone in on those last two verses, let us look at the entirety of the sample prayer Jesus gave to his disciples. It is important to understand that Jesus was giving them something intelligent to pray for, not like the unintelligent, mindless repetition practiced back then and today.

Verses 9b through 15 was not a set phrase or a script prayer to be mindlessly repeated by anybody in Israel's program (or any other time).

By giving the members of the little flock that example of prayer, he was providing corrective (from what they learned from the Pharisees and their vain religious system) and instructive doctrine so that they could pray godly prayers; so they could pray in accordance with God's will in the program they were a part of!

By giving them that example of prayer, Jesus was giving them an understanding of what prayers were supposed to be. And what was it supposed to be?

Real prayers were supposed to be:

1. Enjoyment of intimate fellowship with God
2. Intelligent communion with God about:
 - ♦ What God was doing

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 50: Prayer is Different under Grace

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 50).

Real prayers were supposed to be:

- Enjoyment of intimate fellowship with God
- Intelligent communion with God about:
 - ◆ What God was doing.
 - ◆ Our role in laboring with him.
 - ◆ Our circumstances in the program of which we are part.

When Jesus gives them the sample prayer in Matthew 6, he is showing them the kinds of things that ought to be occupying their minds. And why should those things be in their minds? Because those are things in his mind at that time in the program.

In Matthew 6, the Lord is providing the members of the remnant with an understanding of the type of things that ought to occupy their minds because they occupy his mind at that time.

The believing remnant's prayer should reflect their understanding of the program and their understanding of what God is doing at that time. Their prayers should be an expression of their fellowship with God in those things which he is doing. Their prayers are a communion with God about what is happening, what God is doing and what their part in that should be.

Crabb's Synonyms

Communion: a communication between minds in which things are made common.

Notice the two roots contained in the word communion:

1. common
2. union

Communion is a common union. Prayer is the expression of that common union. It is very close to the word *fellowship*.

Now that we have the definitions out of the way, let us say it again. The prayers of the remnant should express the common union they have with God in what he is doing and their part in it. That is what the prayer of Matthew 6 is about.

Now, the application of it. First, the Lord corrects the vain religious system way of praying.

In verses 5- 6, if they are praying properly and *not as the hypocrites*, when they pray, they will not do so on the street corners to be seen of men; they will pray to their Father in secret.

In verse 7, if they are praying properly and *not as the heathen*, their prayers will not be filled with “vain repetitions.”

After the correction, the Lord moves on to the doctrine in verses 9-15.

What are the things they should be praying about? They should be praying for those things they know are God’s will; the things which God is interested in doing. In order to do so, they must know ‘what time it is.’

Since the preaching at the time of Jesus’ public ministry has been that the kingdom is at hand, it makes sense for them to pray, “thy kingdom come,” does it not? Does that mean the kingdom will not come unless they pray for it to come? Of course not.

Where is Israel on the time schedule? They are in the 4th installment of the 5th course of punishment. The issue of the kingdom being “at hand” was not an issue any other time previous to this. So it makes sense for their prayers to be in connection with the particular time in which they are living.

Now look at verse 12.

Matthew 6:12 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

Why would this be in the prayer? It is there because it is the Father’s will for them to be forgiven; therefore, they must also forgive. And that brings us right back to where we left off. Now we can look at what this issue of what “not being forgiven” means for them.

Matthew 6:14 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Since what they do is what will be done to them, the members of the little flock are being warned about a *mutual or equal or reciprocal judgment*. There is a slight shade of meaning difference between the terms and the most accurate of them is reciprocal.

When they pray, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” this is an expression of their understanding this reciprocal judgment. This judgment is not for salvation but for rewards and for entrance into the kingdom! Again, this is not about their salvation. The believing remnant is already saved.

This issue of *reciprocal judgment* was introduced back in Matthew 5 and it is being reinforced here in Matthew 6 as part of the prayer. But this is not the end of it; other examples of it will follow. As a matter of fact, it will come up again in the sermon on the Mount.

Later on, the Lord will give a number of parables about this issue of reciprocal judgment. Some of those parables are exclusively about this issue while some of the other parables include it with other doctrinal issues.

But to understand what is actually happening, the Lord has just introduced them to this reciprocal judgment issue and now, the Lord is showing them how to integrate what they have learned in their prayers. Actually, in this sample prayer, there are a number of issues they are being taught to pray about. They have been introduced to them and they have more instruction coming. Each of these issues which the Lord has introduced to them are to be the subject matters for their communion and fellowship with their Father in their prayers.

Their intelligent prayer of ‘forgive us our debts and we forgive our debtors’ demonstrates their understanding of what God is doing and what their part in it is. We realize it is not enough for them to merely mimic what they hear. That is why we say it needs to be an ‘intelligent’ prayer – indicating they have an understanding of it.

Once again, I want to emphasize that the Sermon on the Mount is not explaining how to be justified unto eternal life. It is about instructing them in how to get into the kingdom and obtain rewards.

There will be judgments at the start of the kingdom which will determine who gets in to the kingdom and who does not, what positions will be occupied by whom (least to the greatest), as well as other reward issues.

For example, Matthew 5 refers to one of those judgments which determines whether or not there will be a delay for someone getting into the kingdom. Not everyone who is “saved” automatically gets in to the kingdom, at least, not right away.

At the Matthew 5 judgment, the issue of reciprocal judgment is employed.

***Matthew 6:14** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

***John 8:41** Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*

***John 8:42** Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

***John 8:44** Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

(Aside: Mike begins to answer the question as to when he understood about sonship for the last 20 minutes or so and never continues with the following notes.)

We got off on this by saying that we do not have to ‘confess our sins’ in order to be in right standing with God. We are already as forgiven as we can ever be.

Understanding that we are not under the law, but under grace, means we understand that our prayers are going to be different.

In Israel’s program, they prayed three times a day facing the temple. We are to be continuing instant in prayer to the extent that our entire day becomes one big conversation with our Father. That is how we pray without ceasing.

Continuing instant in prayer is like an ongoing conversation we are having with our heavenly Father, while daily prayer is more like an occasional phone call.

We can see the relational difference between the two:

- One is more intimate and personal.
- While the other seems a bit detached from the actual moments of life.

As we continue instant in prayer in the midst of our everyday lives, it is as though our heavenly Father is with us in the midst of everything that is happening.

This is not to say that there may not be times when some extreme circumstance would drive us to step aside from the normal outworking of our day to focus on prayer, but this should be in addition to constant sonship prayer, not in the place of it.

But there is something else to know about this. Is it possible for a person to be edified unto godliness by just praying at certain times instead of continuing instant in prayer? I am sure it is, but with a couple of important differences:

1. We will not develop the specific sonship skill, in prayer, which will be utilized in the heavenly places.

Just like the remnant’s prayers, our prayers should be a time of:

- Intimate fellowship with God
- Intelligent communion with God about:
 - ◆ What God is doing.
 - ◆ Our role in laboring with him (whether we are praying about ourselves or others).
 - ◆ Our circumstances in our program.

Let us make a parallel application for us in this dispensation of Gentile grace with Israel in their program.

If you recall, in the prayer of Matthew 6, the Lord gives them some corrective doctrine about how not to pray. The Lord gives them two ways the vain religious system has taught them wrongly about prayer. The first one is the correction of religious hypocrites and the second is the correction of the pagan Gentiles (heathens). Israel's vain religious system had incorporated both of these errors. The first correction is to the motive of prayer; the second corrects the mechanics of prayer.

Corrective doctrine:

***Matthew 6:5** And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Instruction in righteousness:

***Matthew 6:6** But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

In summation of verses 5- 6, if they are praying properly and 'not as the hypocrites,' the members of the remnant will not be praying in public so as to impress others as to how spiritual they are. Instead, their proper motive for praying (intimacy of relationship and cooperation with what God is doing) will have them praying privately to their Father.

When we are praying about ourselves, what should our motives for praying be?

The Purpose of Prayers for Ourselves:

- To develop the Father/son relationship

How does this take place? It takes place by talking with our Father about two major issues:

1. Those things which he has given to us "in Christ." (Appreciating them for what they are; knowing and expressing the value of what has been given to us; cultivating the attitude of gratitude.)
 2. Those things which God wants to produce by "Christ in us." (Understanding what has already been accomplished by Christ in us and expressing what still needs to be accomplished by Christ in us; cultivating the desire to go further into our sonship life.)
- To demonstrate our understanding of:
 - ◆ The time in which we are living (dispensation of Gentile grace).
 - ◆ What God is doing (inner man work).
 - Edifying unto godliness
 - Renewing our minds

- Bringing us unto a perfect man
- Equipping us to labor with Him now
- Training us as sons for the heavenly places later
- ◆ The process by which those things are accomplished:
 - Confronted with the doctrine
 - Understand the doctrine
 - Believe the doctrine
 - Live out of the doctrine
- ◆ What God is not doing.
 - Israel's program issues
 - Outer man issues
 - Law issues
- ◆ Our part in laboring with God:
 - To make manifest that our will matches our Father's will (we want what he wants).
 - To activate (bring to mind) the doctrine we know and understand so that we are constantly being renewed in our mind, conformed to the image of God's Son, the life of Jesus Christ is made manifest in our mortal bodies, and we are making an impact on Satan's realm to the glory of our heavenly Father.

Let us continue with the parallel issues of Matthew 6 and our kind of praying.

This next section has to do with the mechanics of prayer.

Corrective doctrine:

***Matthew 6:7** But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

Instruction in righteousness:

***Matthew 6:8** Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

In summation of verses 7-8, if they are praying properly and 'not as the heathen,' their prayers will not be filled with "vain repetitions." Their prayers should reflect the understanding that God already knows what they need and constant repetitions will not get them heard or make a difference in God's answer.

Now, let us make an application for us, as members of the body of Christ. What would be some erroneous things for us today with regard to prayer?

- If we pray like Israel:
 - ◆ Confessing our sins to get God's blessing or to stop some bad circumstance from continuing.
 - ◆ Praying as though we are under the law.
- If we use vain repetitions like Israel and the heathen:
 - ◆ Like repeating "the Lord's prayer" as some kind of mantra that protects us.
 - ◆ Like "storming heaven" with multitudes praying for those physical, material requests.
 - ◆ Like forming "prayer chains" that continue around the clock as though God needs constant reminder and asking, or needs to see if we are serious.
- If we pray like superstitious Gentiles; heathen.

And how do superstitious Gentiles pray?

- By dreaming up all kinds of things they would like to see God do and ask.
- These things almost always being physical/material in nature.

And how do saved, but uneducated Gentiles pray?

- They pray contrary to the program they are living in.
- They invent a way (tradition) of praying that appeals to their flesh.
 - ◆ It contains physical, tangible requests.
 - ◆ Things they would like to have (job, money, etc.).
 - ◆ Things they would like to see God do.
 - Heal someone.
 - Intervene in a circumstance (make it rain, keep them safe, etc.).
 - Change someone's mind.
- They tie their request with scriptures from another program which does not apply to them and call it claiming God's promises.

For example:

When they need money:

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

When they need health:

Proverbs 3:7 *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

⁸ *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

Jeremiah 30:17 *For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.*

Jeremiah 30:15 *Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. ¹⁶ Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. ¹⁷ For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.*

Jeremiah 30:24 *The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.*

The way of praying that goes on today is to lift a verse out of Israel's program and also usually out of its context and try to claim it as God's promises today.

Praying this way ignores what God is doing and, at best, manifests a lack of understanding (ye know not...) and, at worst, an unwillingness to cooperate with God (I do not care...).

Now, returning to the parallel issues, what about the mechanics of prayer for us today?

Are we to stand on the street corners and pray loudly so men will think we are very spiritual? No.

But are we to pray on the street corners? Yes!

Are we to pray to God privately so no one can see? Of course, but we are not to be limited to that. We are to pray without ceasing. We are to continue instant in prayer. Prayer is to be as much of our daily life as breathing and that means we will have to work on that.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 51: Prayer Workshop/ What is Prayer & Why Pray?

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 51)

The first 8 minutes of tape Mike discusses a support group on line you may be interested in partaking. The two gentlemen leading this group are Eric Eleming (Elverson PA) and John Fredrick (Spring TX – Houston area). Here is the address: skypesonship@gmail.com

Today is really going to be a Workshop on Sonship Prayer.

Two of the most important questions that people want to have answered about prayer are:

1. What is prayer?
2. Why should we pray?

In the old way of thinking, the answer to the first question is: prayer is simply talking to God. Also, in the old way of thinking about prayer, there were a couple of answers to the second question:

1. We should pray because we are commanded to pray.
2. Prayer is how we get things from God.

But once we begin to understand properly about prayer, especially as adopted sons and daughters living in this dispensation of Gentile grace, then we begin to answer those questions a little differently.

Let us begin with the question, why should we pray?

What we are really asking about here is what motivates us to pray; what is our purpose in praying?

At this point, it is imperative to understand something. I am not interested in just giving us the correct answer, but we must be aware of the correct answer or we will not recognize the incorrect answer. (Kind of like how they recognize fake currency; by studying the real.)

Prayer, like a few other things is considered by most people to be a *good* or *spiritual work*. That understanding implies that something is spiritual or acceptable to God merely on the basis of the act itself – and that is not true. (The Pharisees spent lots of time praying, and they were praying to the right God, but their prayers were useless.)

I think most would agree that prayer to a false god is not a good work. It could be said this kind of prayer is not a good work because it is prayer to the wrong God. Okay. But there is more to it than that.

Believers praying to God for rain, or for healing, or for some other such thing is also not a good work. Why not? After all, they are praying to the right God, are they not?

- When our prayers do not match God's word, then they are not a good work; they are not acceptable to God.
- Prayers, which are contrary to God's will, are not a good work. The time spent in praying contrary to God's revealed will should not be considered as time well spent.

Those kinds of prayers are a waste of time. No matter how sincere the prayer, those kinds of prayers are not spiritual; they are fleshly. Their source is not God; their source is us, our flesh.

There is a human version of love, kindness, patience, endurance, etc., and there is also a godly version and they do not come from the same source; they are not the same thing. The same is true for prayer. There is true prayer which God is pleased with and there is false prayer which he is not pleased with.

We need to keep in mind that prayer, when we produce it, in and of ourselves, is not a good work. That is fleshly praying and fleshly prayers. True prayer, like every other good work, must be something God has generated in us. (For "every good work" see 2 Corinthians 9:8, Colossians 1:10; 1 Timothy. 5:10; 2 Timothy 2:21; Titus 1:16.)

And how does God generate godly 'anything' in us? God generates the godly version of everything in us by means of his word effectually working in us. And how do we know his word is effectually working in us? The word effectually works as we respond positively and properly to it. And what is a positive response to his word? A positive response is when we understand and believe a form of doctrine in his word. And what is a proper response to his word? A proper response is when we take what we have learned, understood, and believed and we put it into practice in our everyday lives.

Prayer, like every other so called "good work," when we produce it, is self-righteousness and God never accepts our righteousness (which is nothing more than the righteousness of the flesh). So, prayer, simply for the sake of praying, is not a good work. I am saying this in the context of something else we are about to study. Just keep this in your mind and shortly it will come in handy.

People think that simply engaging in prayer is a "good work" and God must certainly be pleased with it. The truth is God is only well pleased with us as we take his word and pray in accordance with it. Then, and only then, is prayer a "good work."

Men walk after their own flesh in prayer every day. It makes their flesh feel good and they think they are spiritual because of it, but God wholly rejects it.

So the question right here at the outset is: why should we pray? Better yet, has the godly version of prayer been generated in us or are we just operating under the old understanding of prayer?

Before we get going on the Prayer Workshop, let us make sure we have godly prayer generated in us. By the way, if you are wondering why Paul does not ever call it ‘godly prayer,’ it is because godly prayer is the only kind of prayer Paul is talking about. He does not spend two seconds talking about how to perform prayers in the flesh. When he says pray, he is talking about the intelligent, informed, godly version of prayer that has been installed in the saints by the word of truth which they have heard, understood, believed and lived out of every day; prayers which sound like Paul’s prayers, which are dispensational in nature and are in accordance with God’s will as it is revealed in God’s word.

2 Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

So how do we know if God’s word has generated godly prayer in us or is it still just us? Here is how we know.

1. We understand and believe that we do not know what we should pray for as we ought – Romans 8.
2. We understand that Paul is our teacher and pattern for proper praying and our prayers follow his pattern.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 52: Prayer Workshop/ What is Prayer & Why Pray? Continued,

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 52)

How do we know if God's word has generated godly prayer in us?

1. We understand and believe that we do not know what we should pray for as we ought – Romans 8.
2. We understand that Paul is our teacher and pattern for proper praying and your prayers follow his pattern.
3. We understand that godly prayers are about spiritual, inner man issues; not the physical, material things of this world.
4. We understand the time in which we are living (the dispensation of Gentile grace) and our prayers are in line with what our apostle says about what God is doing during this dispensation of Gentile grace.

And where would we have learned any of this? We would have learned this in God's word. Our flesh does not pray this way because it would never think of it in the first place.

Is it possible to pray one prayer 'in the Spirit' and pray the next prayer 'in the flesh?' The answer is yes.

Prayers that are in line with the doctrine taught to us by Paul (in his 13 epistles) are godly, not because we are sincere, but because they have their source in God (via his word working in us) – and not our flesh.

That is how we know if prayer has been generated in us by God's word or not. Only God's word teaches us to pray like Paul. And just like everything else God wants to generate in us, the more we pray properly, the more familiar it feels, the more skilled at it we become and it becomes the natural thing to do.

Now, let us consider that question, why do we pray?

Let us take a look at that first answer that comes out of our old understanding of prayer. Almost every preacher that preaches on prayer includes this little nugget: we pray because we are commanded to pray.

I am going to take a little bit of an issue with that.

Romans 15:30 *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

When Paul talks to the Romans about praying for him, he “beseeches” them. To “beseech” is “to ask urgently of someone,” (*Oxford English Dictionary*) or to “seek strongly.” (*Crabb’s Synonyms*)

It is like unto ‘beg, solicit, entreat, supplicate, implore, and crave,’ but there is a shade of meaning difference between each of these words. All of these words denote a species of asking; they vary as to the person, the object, and the manner.

The point here is that Paul does not say they need to pray for him because they are commanded to do so. It seems Paul was not interested in making their motivation to pray for him to be about a command.

What about these references; are they commands to pray?

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

Colossians 4:2 *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*

Well, to really see what is going on here, we need the context, do we not?

Romans 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; ¹¹ Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; ¹² Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; ¹³ Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. ¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

This entire list, including “continuing instant in prayer” looks more like a series of exhortations than commands. We know this section in Romans 12 is part of our sonship education; the initial instruction in godly wisdom which constitutes part of our ‘simple son’ education. As part of an education, I think these are less likely to be viewed as commands as much as they should be seen as instructions as to our godly thinking, living, and labor.

Of course you can disagree with me and see them all as commands if you like. I just do not see the context as a list of commands, but rather a list of educational instructions pertinent to our advancement in the doctrine.

Now, look at the Colossians verse in its context.

Colossians 4:1 *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. ² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

Romans 15:30 *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

I suppose one might see all of this as commands but again, I see Paul exhorting the Colossians as to their godly thinking (knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven) and godly living (deal with servants justly and equally, continue in prayer and watch...praying also for us... walk in wisdom...redeeming the time...).

Again, this all looks to me like instruction in godliness, not so much a list of commands. I understand that someone might take an instruction as a command, but I think the main thrusts of these kinds of verses are more like exhortations and instructions.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing.*

When we just read this verse, it certainly looks like a command. But the context will show us something more.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. ¹⁵ See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. ¹⁶ Rejoice evermore. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. ¹⁹ Quench not the Spirit. ²⁰ Despise not prophesyings. ²¹ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

While someone might see all of these as things that ought to be done and make them into commands, it is clear from the language that Paul is beseeching and exhorting them to these things. We have already seen Paul exhort the saints to pray for him. What would be the sense of suddenly changing that to a command? Which is it, an exhortation, or a command? Is prayer sometimes a command and sometimes an exhortation? Do you think that if your apostle is exhorting you to an action that you should not do it because it is not a strict command? Come on now be realistic.

According to *Crabb's Synonyms*, an exhortation is meant to impel someone to action. 'One with authority exhorts, an equal persuades. Exhortations are employed in matters of duty or necessity.'

When Paul talks to Timothy about prayer, he says it this way:

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

I think this verse says exactly how we are to see prayer in all its forms; we are exhorted (strongly urged) by our apostle in the necessary duty of prayer because we will never be the kind of sons and daughters we are called to be without it. That is why these various lists of exhortations are given to us; they are urging us on to godly thinking and the resultant godly conduct and behavior. (And I say 'resultant' because you cannot have true godly living apart from the godly thinking. This is not about what we think is godly, it is about our conduct coming from something sitting in God's word which is working in us to produce that conduct.)

I do not want us to get bogged down in this, so let me wrap this up by saying that if you want to pray because you are commanded to pray, then I would say go ahead, but I do not believe that is the best motivator. Simply doing things because we are told to do them is not how our heavenly Father deals with his sons and daughters. We are told the 'why' behind the things which we are instructed to do so that we can have the same thinking our Father has. It is that 'why' which then motivates us to action.

It is our desire to be godly that motivates us to follow the exhortations. It is our desire to have the doctrine work in us, our desire to be conformed to the image of God's son, our desire to have the life of Jesus Christ made manifest in our mortal bodies, our desire to be edified unto godliness, our desire to make an impact on men and angels, our gratefulness for what God has done for us as lost sinners, our desire to glorify our heavenly Father, our desire to be an extension of his righteousness, our desire to be roused to fullness of function, our longing to labor with our Father in his business, our need to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, our desire to put on the new man, our desire to prove that good and acceptable and perfect will of

God, our privilege to manifest that our Father is the only wise God and the rightful possessor of heaven and earth that motivates us to gladly obey Paul's instructions to us – no matter what they take: command, beseech, instruct, exhort, correct, reprove, or rebuke.

One more thing: If we do not know what to pray for as we ought, the last thing we need is more practice in getting it wrong. Simply commanding people to pray implies that there is some benefit to just performing the action, even if it is contrary to the scriptures. I do not believe that. If that were the case, then Jesus would have commended the Pharisees for their prayers – which he did not.

Lost Gentiles have a track record of praying to false gods. Saved Gentiles have a track record of praying for the wrong things. Nothing godly is accomplished by either one of those. I do not believe God is glorified by either, even though both are 'obeying the command to pray.' If we are going to insist that prayer is a command, can we at least agree that the command pertains to proper prayer and not prayer like the hypocrites or the heathen?

So now I am going to refer back to something we learned at the start of the lesson. Prayer which is contrary to God's word is not acceptable. Not only that, but prayer which is not generated in us by God's word is also not godly or proper and therefore is not acceptable.

To simply say that we pray because we are commanded to pray is to neglect the importance of the doctrine producing the godly version of every good work in us. We tend to think that merely spending time talking to God is about as spiritual a work as we can engage in. In fact, we think the more time we spend praying, then surely the more spiritual we are. But it is not about how much time we spend talking to God, it is about praying because something in God's word has generated godly prayer within us and we are praying out of that!

All of this is to say, I do not get too excited when I hear someone say that we do something simply because we are commanded to do it. If that works for you, then fine. It just sounds more like a parent saying to a child – because I said so! (Which really is no answer at all.)

Now let us look at that second common answer as to why we pray: Because that is how we get things from God.

If people think God is their magic dispenser and prayer is what it takes to get him dispensing, then they are motivated to pray; because, people need and want all kinds of things. Moreover, it would often be easier if God just gave it to them than for them to do it themselves.

Through the course of our studies, we have learned that God is not some genie in a bottle waiting to grant our wishes. God is very interested in having the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and in order for that to happen, God must preclude himself from changing our physical circumstances.

So, if God is not going to ‘give me a job, give me traveling mercies, get me a raise, give me the hundredfold blessing, fix my car, help me pass my test, let me find true love, help me find my car keys, let me win the lottery, heal me, let our team win the ballgame,’ or any of a thousand other physical, material things, saved people pray for every day, then why in the world should we pray?

Well, if we think that prayer is how we get things from God and that is what prayer is about, then certainly this understanding would reduce our desire to pray. We kind of have a ‘what is in it for me’ attitude when it comes to prayer.

But before we learn to change our motives for praying, let me just say that there are benefits that come with prayer which is done properly. The problem is, most believers are not as interested in the true benefits (spiritual benefits) as they are in worldly benefits.

So now let us focus on shifting our motive for praying to that which is proper and right.

In last week’s lessons, we covered a short outline of what prayer was meant to be. I said that we would revisit that outline and flesh it out a bit. Let us do that right now so we will change our motive for praying.

Real prayer is supposed to be:

1. Enjoyment of intimate fellowship with God.
2. Intelligent communion with God about:
 - ◆ What God is doing.
 - ◆ Our role in laboring with him.
 - ◆ Our circumstances in the program of which we are part.

So, when we are praying about ourselves, what should our motives for praying be?

The Purpose of Prayers for Ourselves:

- To develop the Father/son relationship

How does this take place? How does prayer develop this unique relationship with our heavenly Father? And by the way, should not every son and daughter desire to have that close, intimate relationship with God as an adopted son who is involved in an education that works to produce the character of God’s Son in them? They should.

The development of that kind of relationship takes place by talking with our Father (prayer) about two major issues:

1. Those things which he has given to us “in Christ.”
2. Those things which God produces by “Christ in us.”

What is it we will be saying our Father about being in Christ?

- Prayer of Acknowledgment/Appreciation: expressing our understanding of each benefit demonstrates we know what we have been given in Christ.
- Prayer of Understanding: demonstrating that we know the value of each thing which has been given to us in Christ and why it has been given to us.
- Prayer of Thanksgiving: whereby we cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

Remember, you having a conversation with your Father about some things he has already done for you when he put you in Christ. And what is the purpose of this conversation?

Our Prayer about us being in Christ serves to:

- Remind us:
 - ◆ Of what God has done for us (this kind of praying cultivates a spirit of gratitude which should be a continual motivator for us).
 - ◆ Of what we possess in Christ (reminds us of who we now are in Christ and influences how we should think and behave).
 - ◆ Of God's "much more" love to us ((Romans 5:8-9) which should also motivate us).
- Turn our minds toward the spiritual and away from the material:
 - ◆ It activates the doctrine we know.
 - ◆ It causes us to identify God's will.
 - ◆ It showcases what God is doing today.
- Cause us to see ourselves the way God sees us (our new identity) which should motivate us to live out of that new identity.
- Cause us to evaluate the truth of who we have been made to be as compared to what we have been thinking throughout the day.

How does prayer develop our relationship with God?

- The development of that kind of relationship takes place by talking with our Father (prayer) about two major issues:
 1. Those things which he has given to us "in Christ."
 2. Those things which God produces by "Christ in us."

Space for personal reflection and notes