

Session 59: The Perspective of Sonship Prayer

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, 59)

The purpose of relationship prayer is to develop our sonship relationship with:

- God as our adoptive, heavenly Father, and
- us as his adopted sons and daughters.

The specific aspect of the relationship which this kind of prayer builds and develops is adoptive in nature. This means that *relationship prayer* not only builds our general relationship with God, but more specifically, it impacts us in our function as the adopted sons that we are.

We have more than one kind of relationship with God. We have a relationship with him as his children simply by virtue of the fact that we are saved. Because of salvation, we are now ‘in the family.’ But adoption is an advanced aspect of relationship that goes beyond simply being saved or just being part of the family of God.

Once we understand Romans 8:14-15 and properly respond to it with the cry of “Abba, Father,” the Spirit, which was given to us when we trusted Christ as our Savior, can begin to function as “the Spirit of adoption.”

Now, what does it mean for the Spirit to function as the Spirit of adoption? The Spirit has more than one function. One of his functions is as the Spirit of adoption. The natural question is: what is the Spirit doing as the Spirit of adoption?

The Spirit functions as the Spirit of adoption as he leads us through the educational curriculum in Paul’s epistles, which is designed to install our Father’s wisdom in us, to the end that we function as the godly creatures (able to think, live, and labor with God) we have been made to be in Christ.

To tie all of this together, relationship (sonship) prayer is not so much about developing a general or ‘family’ relationship with God, as it is about developing the adopted son aspect of the relationship. In other words, it is about developing the aspect of the relationship whereby we begin to function in accordance with who we are “in Christ.”

This is the kind of relationship which we should develop and live out of while we are on this earth. It is also the kind of relationship we will live out of in the heavenly places throughout eternity.

By engaging in relationship (sonship) prayer, we are deepening and developing the Father/son relationship we have with God. (Shortly, we will talk a little more about why we should desire that relationship and why it is so critical to our edification.)

For now, just know that this kind of praying is more than just an exercise in developing a relationship.

Now, let me make sure you understand how this kind of prayer is done. We will call this the mechanics of relationship prayer which has three parts.

Part one:

- Acknowledgement – we can identify two categories of things which form the basis of our relationship with God.
 1. The things which were given to us “in Christ.”
 2. The “glory” which is revealed in us by “Christ being formed in us.”

In this study, we will only concentrate on category #1 the things given to us in Christ. In a later study, we will focus on the glory category.

Part two:

- Understanding – we know what those things are about and can talk about them intelligently with our Father as they pertain to his purposes.
 1. His giving certain things to us “in Christ.”
 2. His accomplishing other things in us by “Christ in us.”

Again, we will only focus in this part of our study on the things given to us in Christ. Later, we will focus on the things by “Christ in us.”

Part three: (Which is really the end result or goal of the first two parts.)

- Building the relationship – through this kind of praying, three things are accomplished in our inner man.
 1. Our love for him deepens and abounds, as we love him in more ways than before.
 2. Our increasing knowledge of him gives us a more intimate appreciation for who he is.
 3. Our gratitude is developed in us as we value and esteem what he has done for us.

Now we are coming to the very reason for going back through this again. We are about to discover what I did not tell you before – which I should have told you.

These three things become the basis for our service.

1. We serve him because we love him.
2. We serve him because we know him; he is worthy of our service.
3. We serve him out of gratitude.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 60: The Perspective of Sonship Prayer, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, 60)

What I need us to understand is that relationship prayer has to do with being able to pass the checkpoint in Romans 12:1.

This is why it is so critical that we begin to engage in this type of prayer now. Really, I should have taught this to you all along as we were going through every part of Romans up to this point. I should have pointed out every mercy (as we came to it) and taught you to pray about it right then and there so you would have been doing this all along.

That way, you would be adding item after item to your relationship prayer as we progressed through the doctrine. At least you are learning it now. So we have to engage in this because the more we do it, the more impact the mercies of God will have in us. The more we talk to God about these mercies in the ways we have discussed, the stronger will be our commitment to the education and the greater the odds of our success as a son. (I hate to say it that way, but you get the idea.)

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The checkpoint of Romans 12:1 is for us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. The apostle Paul is asking us to do this on the basis of “the mercies of God.” We have already seen that “the mercies of God” are the things which were given to us “in Christ” when we trusted Jesus as our Savior.

We have also seen that the first part of relationship (sonship) prayer concerns those things which were given to us in Christ. There is a connection between the “mercies of God” and relationship prayer.

Therefore, those three results of relationship prayer not only constitute the basis of our service to God, but more specifically, our sacrifice, which is the reasonable aspect of our service. In other words, relationship prayer is part of the process whereby we are able to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Relationship prayer is part of the process whereby we pass the checkpoint of Romans 12:1, which is our sacrifice: our reasonable service.

Paul is asking us to “present our bodies” on the basis of “the mercies of God.” Those “mercies” include (but are not limited to) the aspects of our new identity in Christ.

What God gave to us when we trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior is considered to be part of *the mercies of God*. Let us look at these “mercies” by dividing them into 2 simple categories.

Category #1: New Identity Mercies

These “mercies” are the components of our new identity in Christ, but I am also including who we were in Adam so we can better appreciate what was done for us.

In Adam	In Christ
<u>Condemnation</u>	<u>Justification</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under Sin• Unrighteous Imputed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forgiveness• Righteousness
<p><i>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.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enemies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Atonement (peace with God)
<u>Abomination</u>	<u>Sanctification</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Servants of Sin• Free from Righteousness• Course of this World	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dead to Sin• Alive unto God• Sons of God
<u>Alienation</u>	<u>Exaltation</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uncircumcision• Satan’s Possession• Aided the Adversary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One New Man• Citizen of Christ’s Kingdom• Heavenly Vocation

Category #2: Non-identity Mercies

Our liberty in Christ:

- Freedom from fear motivation
- Freedom from the bondage of the law
- Freedom from serving out of fear
- Freedom from the rudiments of the world
- Freedom from a strictly regulated ‘religious’ lifestyle in which you observe days, months, times, and years, and rituals, ceremonies, and observances such as water baptism, physical circumcision, holidays (holy-days), dietary regulations and so.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. ²⁰ Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ²¹ (Touch not; taste not; handle not; ²² Which all are to perish with the using;) after the

commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Galatians 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; ² But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: ... ⁹ But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

These are called elements and rudiments because of the nature of how they are directly associated with childhood training and childhood teaching aids. They are only shadows without substance: signs and wonders designed to impress children. They are the observance of special days, special places, special buildings, and special events, used to teach children.

But today, God is not treating us like a child, he is treating us as an adult, and he does not utilize things like that with us today. In fact, if that is being utilized, we are to understand and appreciate that those things are *not* of God, but of men. They are counterfeits and fakes and they are dishonoring to our heavenly Father.

- Freedom from governorship and limited decision-making
- Freedom from tutors and governors

As a son we get to make decisions on our own; decisions that are made in light of our heavenly Father instructing us out from the pages of his word and not from the opinion of men or any other competing system of wisdom. Those are but a few of the distinct differences between being treated like a child under tutors and governors and being treated as an adult, adopted son by our father.

- The redemption of our body;
 - ◆ Deliverance from the bondage of corruption by means of a glorified body.
- The Spirit given to us;
 - ◆ The Spirit has a variety of functions.
- A heavenly vocation in the creature;
 - ◆ We take some position in the government of God.
- We have unlimited and unrestricted access to God.
- Part of the one new man;

- ◆ In Christ, we will be a part of a single body which will bring life to the creature, return righteousness to the heavenlies and carry out God's eternal purpose in his creation.
- An inheritance;
 - ◆ As heirs of God we receive an inheritance based on the work of Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.
- We are accepted in the beloved.
- We are blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Do not confuse "Christ in us" issues as mercies which were given to us in Christ. These would be things such as:

- The promise of glory (which shall be revealed in us),
- Hope (that delivers us from the suffering of this present time and suffering of Christ),
- Edification unto godliness.

What is Paul asking us to do on the basis of these "mercies of God?" He is asking us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are looking at this because relationship prayer is part of the process which will allow us to say – yes, I will present my body a living sacrifice.

Arriving at Romans 12 in our study is not the time to decide if we are willing to do this or not. This checkpoint is placed where it is, in order to assess whether the things taught to us so far are properly working in us or not.

In other words, we are not going to stop in Romans 12 so everyone can decide, on the basis of the mercies of God, if they are willing to present their bodies a living sacrifice or not. That work needs to be done in advance so that when we get there, we know what is being asked of us and we can confidently say, – yes, I will present my body a living sacrifice. And then we simply move to the second issue (Romans 12:2) which is a pre-doctrinal exhortation designed to set up our thinking regarding what we are about to encounter; our education proper as sons, the first of the sonship decision-making skills.

***Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Beseech is a form of asking but it includes an element of urgency to it. When we read that Paul is "beseeching" us to do something, think of it as though Paul is saying, 'I am about to ask you to do something which is very important.' That way we are thinking about "beseech" properly.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Commonly, we would say this refers to ‘saved’ people. In this case, I take it to refer to those who have made the cry of “Abba, Father,” been established as sons, who understand the role of the dispensation of Gentile grace and the necessity of the future resumption of Israel’s program. I say that because, without the establishment doctrines of our sonship, we will not be equipped to fully understand or properly respond to the doctrine that is about to be presented to us. So, it really does not matter if I say anything or not; that is how it will work.

So why say anything? I say it as a warning to anyone who is tempted to jump over the first eleven chapters of Romans hoping to shortcut their way to the education. I beg you, do not do that. Make sure you cover everything completely and in order.

There is a real sense in which these forms of doctrine, in Romans 1-11, will serve like pieces of armor to protect us from certain ‘untruths’ that are designed to destabilize us, shake us, and remove us from the truth. Do not underestimate the ability of Satan’s untruths and the ability of some circumstances to make you doubt and become uncertain. These doctrines are meant to fully persuade us so that we are not “shaken in mind” about these foundational truths.

The doctrines in Romans 1-11 are foundational and necessary which is why we refer to them as ‘establishment doctrine.’ They will establish us and they will stablish us, if we know the difference.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The “mercies of God” are the basis on which Paul beseeches us. In other words, if the mercies of God are known and understood and we are responding to them properly, then we have everything working in our inner man, which is necessary to do what Paul beseeches us to do.

It is our familiarity with and understanding of these mercies that allows us to deepen and broaden our love and devotion to our heavenly Father, understand him for who he is, and appreciate all he has done for us.

These form the basis of our service and, in this case, our sacrifice.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The only way we will present our bodies a living sacrifice will be on the basis of those mercies.

And really, it does not yet matter if we fully understand all that is involved in ‘presenting our bodies a living sacrifice.’ If we are responding properly to the mercies of God through our prayer life, then we will be able to do what Paul beseeches us to do.

When I say, ‘respond properly,’ that means:

- We must know what those are and identify them.
- We must have an appreciation for them and understand their value.
- We express this to our heavenly Father in prayer as a real conversation with him and not just going through the motions.

That way, when we do get to Romans 12, all of the necessary work will already be done, and we will be able to comply with Paul’s request to present our body a living sacrifice, no matter what that entails.

Now let us put this into a workshop format so we can see what this kind of relationship (sonship) prayer sounds like.

Introduce the prayer by naming the individual mercy you will be praying about. Let us just pick one: adoption. The way to introduce this prayer is to ‘name it.’ Name whatever “mercy” you will be praying about.

So our prayer would start something like this: ‘Father, I want to talk with you about my adoption.’ This is the ‘acknowledgement’ part of the prayer.

The second part is the ‘understanding.’ This is where we talk to our Father about the particular mercy. This part of our prayer should include things such as:

- What is _____? In this case, what is adoption?

What do you understand adoption to be? For me, it is an aspect of relationship with our Father that goes beyond being in the family of God, but extends to God’s eternal business. What is it to you? Think about it for a minute. Then, say that to him.

‘Father, I know you adopted me and I understand adoption to be a special relationship with you; a relationship whereby I can participate in your business.’

- What do I know about _____? In this case, what do I know about adoption? What does it involve?

Think about it; what does adoption involve? What is its purpose? The goal of adoption is to install our Father’s wisdom in us so that we are capable of laboring with him in his business. We

become capable by learning to think like God thinks and by learning to do things his way (godly living).

Adoption involves an education. We are 'led' through Paul's epistles by the Spirit.

Adoption requires a commitment to that education. That commitment is: to honest attendance; we are assembling together for this purpose and not some other, to interactive learning; if I do not understand something I am going to ask so I can find out, and to the education as a top priority. It must have importance or many things will eventually crowd it out of our lives.

One of the purposes of prayer is to build our relationship with our heavenly Father, whereby we are developing:

Now, put some of that into a prayer:

'Father, I know when I made the cry of "Abba, Father" I was saying 'yes' to your offer to educate me in your business. I want to labor with you in your business. Even though I do not know everything there is to know about that, I do know that I am going to be part of a body that will function up in the heavenly places. I understand we will take the place of Satan's angels in those governmental positions.

In order for me to do that, I am going to need your wisdom. I need those four decision-making skills that you will teach me in the book of Romans. And after I learn them, I will need to live out of them by applying what I am learning to my everyday decisions.

Father I want to tell you how committed I am to doing this. I am willing to commit to this as the important thing that it is. (I am purposefully being vague here, as I do not want to put words in anyone's mouth.)

Father, let me tell you what it means to me to be able to be a part of your business in eternity. (Then you tell him.) I want to sit at that table of fully educated sons and hear your plans for the ages to come. I want to see those ages the way you do, not because it makes me a 'big shot,' but because that would be glorifying to you. That would be part of your inheritance in the saints.

Father, I want to love you for more than saving me from sin; I want to love you for giving me the adoption. I do love you for that, but I want to love you more. As my apostle said, I want my love to abound more and more.

Knowing that you are offering me (along with every saint) an adoption, tells me how you feel about me: how you feel about us. It tells me something about the part you want us to fill in your plan and purpose. I want to appreciate what you have done in adopting me more than I do now. I realize that when my thoughts are turned toward these "mercies"

that I am getting to know you. And with every thing that I learn, may it work to show me how wise you are, and how worthy you are to be the possessor of heaven and earth.

And I am grateful for my adoption; thank you for giving it to me in your Son. It took the sacrifice of your son to make this available and I know things would be very different if this was not something you gave to me.

Lord, what wisdom you have. In your wisdom, you kept this a secret so that it could become a reality. Thank you for your wisdom. I stand in awe of what I do know about you and I want to know more. I want my gratitude to measure up to the things you have done for me.

I know that a checkpoint is coming up in Romans 12:1. I want to be ready to pass that checkpoint so that I am truly ready to continue in the next category of doctrine. I also understand that praying to you like this is part of the process that will produce a solid sonship relationship between you and me. Amen.'

Space for personal reflection and notes