

Working Out Your Salvation

The Wonder and Mystery of Sanctification

February 19, 2017

Part 7- Media Gratiae- the "Means" of Our Sanctification- Part 4

The Acts 2:37-44

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

To the Glory of God

The reason that God has chosen a people for Himself is to give them a particular Destiny. And that Destiny is their holiness, their Sanctification, or their conformity to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Apostle Paul wrote this in **Ephesians 1:4**:

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

... so the reason that God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world was not merely to be forgiven, but so that, *in* the Lord Jesus Christ and through His Merits alone we would become two things:

1. Holy
2. Blameless

And the Goal of this "conformity" to Christ (according to **Romans 8:29**) is so that Jesus might be:

... the firstborn among many brethren.

And this means at least two things:

1. It means that our being changed into the Likeness of Jesus (sanctification) is because we are brought into the Family of God (Adoption) and given that family's "likeness" with God as our Father and Jesus as our Brother
2. It means that Jesus is not just "another" brother, but the *unique* "Firstborn" Who is exalted and worshiped by all the other brothers.

So, from the very beginning, God predestined that His people would be sanctified. That was *always* the Goal. The Goal was that wicked rebels would be so utterly transformed by what God did for them, all by Himself and at great cost to Himself, the Death of His Own Son, that they would come into the very likeness of His Son.

Another way of understanding this is to say that we were *predestined* not to simply be saved, but we were predestined to *share* in the Son's Holiness. And in that Holiness we would be able to see Jesus in His Glory and celebrate Him in the manner He deserves to be celebrated.

And sin stops that from happening. Sin, and right now I'm talking about the remaining sin in people who are already saved, sin robs God of being celebrated for Who He really is. Sin beholds the Glory of God and chooses something else to celebrate. And that is *why* we are all being sanctified. There are things, aspects, conditions, beliefs,

actions, thoughts, affections, and inclinations in us that are “holdovers” from our past lives that will not allow us to share in Christ’s Holiness.

And because God understands that the very best way He can manifest Love to us is by allowing us to see Him and delight in Him and enjoy Him forever; God is determined to change us. God exercises all His Might to not merely forgive us, but to remake us so that we may see Jesus for Who He really is and celebrate what we see.

And the Celebration of Who Jesus is, by those He chose to save, is what the Bible speaks about when it uses the word “Joy”. So, Joy is possessed by sinful human beings when they are so radically transformed that they can see Jesus in His Glory and rejoice in that. Having the Joy of the Lord is saved people being supernaturally changed from one realm of Glory to the next so that everything else in all of Creation becomes dim and base and ugly and worthless in comparison to the risen Christ. And that is why CS Lewis said:

“Joy is the serious business of Heaven”¹

And so, *nothing* is more important to God than that we have this Joy. *Nothing* means more to God than that He is so highly valued and treasured and enjoyed by those He chose to save. So, God is deadly serious about His people having this Joy, and He has promised frightening Punishments to those who refuse to see Him and enjoy Him forever.

And that is why I conceive of the Holiness of God the way I do. God is completely unique, totally distinct, and utterly unlike anything else. The one, true, and living God Who is revealed in Scripture is “Self-existent” and “Self-sustaining” and “Self-sufficient”.

And that means that God is infinitely complete and full and perfect in Himself, all by Himself. And since that is true, God was not brought into existence by anything *outside* Himself. That’s what it means for God to be “Self-existent”.

Secondly, this “Self-existent” God depends on *nothing* for His *ongoing* Existence. And that’s what it means for God to be “Self-sustaining”. And because God is both “Self-existent” and “Self-sustaining”, He is utterly “Self-sufficient”. In other words, the God Who

¹ CS Lewis; *Letters to Malcolm*

we worship is Complete, Full, and Perfect. So, God is a Marvel, a Wonder, a Mystery, and He is glorious.

And the sacred Scriptures go on to say that this "Self-existing", "Self-sustaining", "Self-sufficient" God exists as three Divine Persons, within one Divine Essence. So, the Father knows and loves the Son perfectly, completely, and infinitely. The Son knows and loves the Father perfectly, completely, and infinitely. And the Holy Spirit is the perfect, complete, and infinite *expression* of the Father's and the Son's Knowledge and Love of each other.

And this perfect Trinitarian Fellowship is absolutely *essential* to the Fullness and Perfection and Completeness of God. There is no lack, no deficiency, and no need with God. There is only perfect Fullness and perfect Completeness and entire Self-sufficiency.

So, the Holiness of God can be understood as the *summation* of all of the unique and amazing Attributes and Characteristics that make God to be God. The Holiness of God is His transcendent Completeness and utter Self-sufficiency.

But there is a missing dimension in that description of Holiness. Because God is utterly unique and Self-existent, there is nothing besides God except what God wills to create. Therefore, God is "Absolute Value". He is "Absolute Worth". And this is just a fancy way of saying that God's transcendent Completeness makes Him infinitely valuable.

And it's necessary to introduce this dimension of Holiness into the definition because the Bible presents God's Holiness in terms of Morality, as well as terms of Transcendence. And that means that Holiness is not just "otherness". So, God is not Holy simply because He is "different", but because He is "Good" and "Pure" and "Right", and He is "Good" and "Pure" and "Right" in *infinite* degrees. There is no "Good" that is better, or even the same as the "Good" that God is. There doesn't exist any "Purity" that is *more* pure or even equal in purity to God. And nothing that exists in all the Universe is as "Right" as God is Right.

Now stay with me because this has to do with *why* we are struggling so hard to be sanctified. Before Creation, there was no Standard of "Goodness" and "Righteousness" *outside* of God that could be used to say, "God is Good or Right according to these standards". And that was true because all there was was God. So, when there is only

God, how do you define "Good"? How can there be Holiness without a *moral* dimension, and not just a *transcendent* one?

So, the *moral* dimension of God's Holiness is that every affection, every thought, and every act of God is consistent with the infinite Value of His Own transcendent Fullness. In other words, Holiness is not simply the infinite Worth of God's transcendent Fullness, but also the *perfect Harmony* that exists between the Value of God's Own transcendent Fullness and all God's Affections, Thoughts, and Acts. And that pristine Harmony is what the Bible calls:

The Beauty of Holiness

So, let me summarize this. God is transcendent in His Self-existent Completeness, and is, therefore, of infinite Value. And there is a beautiful and perfect *Harmony* between the Value of God's transcendent Completeness and all His Affections, Thoughts, and Acts. And *that* is God's Holiness. In other words, God's Holiness is His absolute Value, along with the breathtaking Harmony of all His Acts in conjunction with that Value. The English Puritan Steven Charnock said that God's Holiness was that He:

“works with a ‘becomingness’ to His Own Excellency.”²

Now the reason all this matters is because the *basis* as to *why* you and I are commanded to be “holy” is because God *Himself* is Holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

16 because it is written, “*YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.*”

Now we read that Passage and we nod our heads like we understand it. But wait just a minute. What does it mean for the Apostle Peter to teach that the *basis* or the *reason* as to *why* God calls us to Holiness is that He Himself is Holy? Is God telling us that we are to become Deity? Are we to assume that since we are being sanctified that we are becoming “Self-existent” and “Self-sufficient” and “Self-

² Steven Charnock; *The Existence and Attributes of God*; page 115

sustaining" like God is? When we say that we are being changed into the Image and Likeness of Jesus Christ through our progressive Sanctification, do we mean that we will become transcendent and walk on water and raise the dead and forgive sin and sit at God's Right Hand?

When the writer of **Hebrews** says that the *reason* a Good and Merciful God allows His Own children to go through trials and persecutions and troubles is so that we may:

Hebrews 12:10

... share in His holiness

... what aspect of God's Holiness will we share? Are we going to share in being a part of the Divine Trinity? No. We need to understand that we will *never* be Deity. We will *never* be transcendent like God is transcendent. We will *never* become "self-existent" or "self-sustaining" or "self-sustaining". No, what Peter and the other man meant was that we are being changed by and through and in our ongoing Sanctification so that in all our affections and in all our thoughts and in all our acts, we are coming into a beautiful Harmony with the infinite Value of God.

So, the "Holiness" that we are coming into by our Sanctification and the Holiness that we will "share" by being disciplined by the Lord is that we "feel" and "think" and "do" *only* what is consistent with God being the supreme and infinite Treasure of the universe, and that we find the fullness of Joy in *that*. So, our Holiness is our conformity to the infinite Value of God.

Now this is the seventh Message on Sanctification. And as I told you, God has been dealing with my heart for many years about this issue because there is so much confusion about it, and also because there is very little discussed about it among the people of the modern Church. And so, I thought it wise to take a short "vacation" from our verse by verse "journey" through the Gospel of Luke to begin this new year by examining *some* of what the Bible teaches about already saved people becoming progressively holy.

And it is good for us to be reminded just why there is so much in the Bible about this subject, because a question always comes up when this subject is discussed:

If I am saved and if Salvation is eternal,
then *why* must I continually strive to be holy?

And the short answer is:

Because God commands it and expects it.

The writer of **Hebrews** was especially used by God the Holy Spirit to give us a glimpse of both God's Command and His Expectation when he wrote this in **Hebrews 12:14**:

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

We need to know that this portion of Scripture was *not* written to the lost world. It was written to those who have already experienced the miracle of the New Birth. And so, the Divine Command given here is:

Pursue peace (with all men) and the Sanctification...

So, already saved people are *commanded* by God the Spirit, through the inerrant and infallible Word of the living God, to “**pursue**” two things:

1. Peace with all men
2. Sanctification

Now this writer was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to write down a very interesting word that was translated into English here as “**pursue**”. And this word comes from a Greek word (diokoo), that means: *to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing; to run after; to seek after eagerly*³

So, we are *commanded* here by the Lord of the Church to “run swiftly” after peace with all men and Sanctification. We are commanded to “seek after eagerly” peace with all men and Sanctification.

³ Strong's Concordance #1377 (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

And I suggest to you that this "swift running" and this "eager seeking" after these two things must be *purposeful*, and it must be *deliberate*, or it won't be at all. And if it is purposeful and deliberate, then it is something that we are serious about, something that we think about and talk about and pray about, and is a subject that we share with other believers.

So, pursuing Sanctification on purpose is not optional. You simply *cannot* read the Bible honestly and come away with the notion that *some* saved people run swiftly after Sanctification while others, who are equally saved, choose not to participate. No, *all* who are truly born from above are actively engaged in this eager seeking and deliberate pursuit of progressive Holiness.

And so, the Divine Expectation in this verse is that genuinely saved people are going to Heaven:

... without which no one will see the Lord.

The Bible teaches that all truly regenerate people will see the Lord in Heaven one day. And yet, the Holy Bible declares here that without this ongoing and consistent striving to be holy, you're not going to Heaven. So, what happens? Do genuinely saved people *lose* their Salvation over Sanctification? Am I teaching and does the Bible teach that saved people will still not make it into Heaven unless they do something to earn it? No.

What I am saying, and what the Word of God teaches clearly and repeatedly, is that all truly saved people have experienced the miracle of the New Birth that sovereignly took away from them the old, "Adamic" nature, and gave them a new "divine nature" (**2 Peter 1:4**) that loves God and that loves the things of God. And the Apostle Paul taught that saved people are not merely "improved" versions of the same old person they were when they were lost, but are actually "new creatures" or "new creations" (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

The Apostle John taught that it is *impossible* for a genuinely saved person to continue long term in the sins and inclinations of his heart that he was saved out of precisely because the "seed of Christ" is now in him (**1 John 3:9**).

The truly born again soul has been given both the power and desire to do God's Pleasure (**Philippians 2:13**), and God has allotted to

every saved person the ability to trust God and believe what God said (**Romans 12:3**). But even more importantly, Salvation gives to the fallen human the single most amazing gift that the world has ever seen, and that is that frail and weak people now genuinely love God (**1 John 4:19**).

The Bible goes on to teach that all saved people have the Person of God the Holy Spirit dwelling inside him (**2 Corinthians 6:16; Romans 8:26**), while Jesus is at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High interceding for that believer day and night (**Hebrews 7:25**). And all of this works together to compel us toward Holiness.

So, the way we need to understand **Hebrews 12:14** is that since it is true that only those who are running swiftly toward Holiness after they are saved will enter into Heaven, God will *assure* that all who were chosen for Salvation before the foundation of the world, all whom God the Spirit drew to Jesus, all those whom Jesus died to save will actually *do* what this verse says, thus *proving* that they have been truly redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb!

And the way we will “do” what this verse says is by availing ourselves of the four “Means of Grace” that Brother Andy just read to us from **The Acts 2:42**:

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

... and over the last two weeks, we have been looking closely at just what Dr. Luke meant by what he wrote here. These are the elements, the methods, the ways, the tools that God has graciously given to the Church by which already saved people are progressively made holy. And so, by default, the Church must provide all four of these tools, and, by default, we must avail ourselves of them.

Now two weeks ago, we looked at what he meant by the “Apostle’s Teaching”, and last week we explored what “Godly Fellowship” looks like. And so today, I want to cover the other two “means” or “methods” or “ways” that God has graciously given to the Church whereby we may be radically transformed and made holy:

1. Breaking of Bread (The Lord’s Supper)
2. Prayer

1. The Breaking of Bread (The Lord's Supper)

We believe and teach that the Lord's Supper is an Ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's Body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's Blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His Death until He returns. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's Body and Blood, not *literally* or *physically*, but *spiritually*, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the Benefits that Jesus obtained through His Death. And by partaking of this Ordinance regularly, we grow in Knowledge and Grace and are Sanctified.

The Gospels of **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** all report the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples the night before He died while **John's Record** goes into great depth in what Jesus taught at the Last Supper. Each Account describes Jesus giving thanks or blessing the bread and the cup, and giving them to His disciples saying that the bread was His Body and the cup was the Blood of the New Covenant. And in **Luke 22:19**, Jesus said:

“Do this in remembrance of Me.”

Now, as far as I can tell from the earliest records, the Christian Church did what Jesus said: They reenacted that Supper in remembrance of Jesus and His Death. They did it *regularly* and they did it *together*.

In **1 Corinthians 11:20**, the Apostle Paul refers to an Event in the life of the Church called “the Lord's Supper.” And it's called “the Lord's Supper” because it was instituted or ordained by the Lord Jesus, and because its' very meaning celebrates the memory of the Lord's Death.

So, the historical origin of the Lord's Supper is that final Supper that Jesus ate with His disciples the night before He was crucified. And the actions and meaning of it are all rooted in what Jesus said and did on that last night. Jesus Himself is the Origin of the Lord's Supper. He commanded that it be continued. And He is the focus and content of it.

The Lord's Supper is also an Act of the gathered Family of those who believe in Jesus, who are collectively called “the Church”. This is *not* an act for unbelievers. Now unbelievers may be present; we

welcome them to be present because there is nothing secretive about the Lord's Supper. It is *always* done in public. Both the Ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are carried out in public. Neither one is a secretive, cultic ritual with magical powers. They are public acts of worship by the gathered Church. In fact, **1 Corinthians 11:26** says that the Lord's Supper is a public proclamation about the Lord's Death.

Now whereas we do take the Lord's Supper to those who are imprisoned or sick, or who tend to those who are imprisoned or sick, that kind of individual celebration is exceptional and not the Biblical norm. Five times in **1 Corinthians 11**, Paul speaks of the church "coming together" when the Lord's Supper is eaten:

- ✓ Verse 17b: **"When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse."**
- ✓ Verse 18: **"For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you."**
- ✓ Verse 20: **"When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat."**
- ✓ Verse 33: **"When you come together to eat, wait for one another."**
- ✓ Verse 34: **"If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment."**

So, the Apostle taught that they were *debasing* the Lord's Supper by connecting it too closely with their normal eating, because some people had lots to eat while others had nothing. So, he said, *"Eat your own supper at home and come together to eat the Lord's Supper"*.

And notice the word "church" in verse 18:

"when you come together as a church."

... this is the Body of Christ, the Assembly of the followers of Jesus. Those who have turned from idols and trusted Jesus alone for the forgiveness of their sins, and for the hope of eternal life, and for the satisfaction of their souls. These are Christians. So, the participants in the Lord's Supper are always the gathered believers in Jesus.

We should know that the Lord's Supper is not a plaything. We should celebrate it with a sense of weightiness because the mental action of the participants of the Lord's Supper are to focus their minds

on Jesus, and especially His historical Work in dying for our sins. So, as we “do” the physical act of “eating” and “drinking”, we are to do the mental act of “remembering”. That is, we are to consciously call to mind the Person of Jesus as He once lived, and the Work of Jesus as He once died and rose again, and what His Work means for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Lord’s Supper is a stark reminder, time after time, that Christianity is *not* “new-age spirituality”. It is not “getting in touch with your inner being”. It is not mysticism. It is rooted in historical facts. Jesus lived. He had a physical Body with a Heart that pumped Blood and Skin that bled. He died publicly on a Roman Cross in the place of sinners so that all who believe on Him might be rescued from the Wrath of God. Those things actually happened once and for all at a particular time in history.

Therefore, the mental action of the Lord’s Supper is foundationally remembering. Not imagining. Not dreaming. Not channeling. Not listening. Not going into neutral. It is a conscious directing of the mind back into history to Jesus and what we know about Him from the Bible. The Lord’s Supper roots us, time after time, in the nitty-gritty of history. Bread and Cup. Body and Blood. Execution and Death.

But, we also need to understand that pagans and atheists and unbelievers can do everything I just described so far. If the devil himself could put on flesh, he could eat, drink, and remember. So, there is nothing inherently “spiritual” about this, so far. So, in order for the Lord’s Supper to be what Jesus means for it to be, something much *more* must be happening than only eating, drinking, and remembering. And that “something” must be what neither unbelievers nor the devil can do. And that is this:

Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ’s Body and Blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the Benefits that Jesus obtained for us through His Death, and thus we grow in grace.

But where does this idea of “partaking of Christ’s body and blood . . . spiritually . . . by faith” come from?

1 Corinthians 10:16-18

16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

Here are believers, those who trust and treasure Jesus Christ, and Paul says that they are “**sharing**” in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Literally, they are experiencing a “partnership” in His Death.

So, what does this sharing/partnership mean? I think verse 18 gives us the clue because it uses a similar word, but compares it to what happened in the Jewish sacrifices under the Old Covenant:

Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

What does sharer/participant/partner in the altar mean? It means that they are “sharing in” or “benefiting from” what happened on the altar. They are enjoying, for example, forgiveness and restored fellowship with God.

So, I take verses 16 and 17 to mean that when believers eat the Bread and drink the Cup *physically*, we are also eating and drinking *spiritually*. So, we eat and drink, in other words, we take into our lives what happened on the Cross. And so, by faith, by trusting in all that God is for us in Jesus, we nourish ourselves with the Benefits that Jesus obtained for us when He bled and died on the Cross.

So, when Paul said;

16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

... he meant: We feast spiritually at the Lord’s Table by faith on every spiritual Blessing bought by the Body and Blood of Christ. And neither unbelievers nor pagans nor atheists can do that. The devil can’t do it.

This is a gift only for the Family. So when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we feast spiritually by faith on all the Promises of God bought by the Blood of Jesus. And as we do that together and as we do that consistently, we are changed and allowed to share in God's Holiness.

2. Prayer

Now I spent the better part of five years going over every single Prayer in the Bible during our Wednesday evening Services. So, I'm not going to go into every aspect of Prayer this morning. What I want to concentrate on today is how Prayer helps us to become holy.

It is very sad but also very frightening to me to hear many of the prayers that come out of the modern Church. The way people pray shows a gross lack of understanding about what Prayer is and why God gave it to us.

Prayer is talking to and hearing from God. Prayer is making petitions to the Almighty. But prayer is much more than simply telling God what you want, and then psyching yourself up so you can believe to receive what you ask for.

Fundamentally, Prayer is a gift of God's Grace whereby we are changed to want and ask for only that which is God's Will. And there is a very important Passage that deals with this issue, so let's look at **James 4:1-10**:

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**"**

- 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**
- 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**
- 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.**
- 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.**

God says here through James that wanting worldly pleasures and engaging in them is the source of all the squabbles and conflicts in the Church. So, we could eliminate Church splits and religious wars if everybody in the Church would come to God in humility and brokenness. And the best way to come before God in humility and brokenness is through prayer.

James 4:2b-3

2 ...You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Now, evidently, praying amiss is common among us, and Jesus plans to change that through the discipline of prayer. So prayer was designed by God and given to the Church so that by availing ourselves of this magnificent "Means of Grace", we will become the humble and broken and trembling people that God desires. The Prophet Isaiah was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say:

Isaiah 66:2b

... But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

So, the entire function of Prayer is to humble us and to break us and to cause us to tremble at God's Word. You see, in His Omnipotence, God has decreed that it is His Will to do certain things in the earth. And God *could* have carried out His Will all by Himself. But He didn't. God has determined to do those things in the earth *by answering the prayers of His people*.

So, we are to learn what is God's Will, and then pray that God will do what He has already determined it is His Will to do. So, we are to

read Scripture and pray in accord with that. And that is what it means when the Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 14:15b

... I will pray with the spirit...

Praying "with" or "in" the Spirit is to pray in accord with the *product* of the Spirit, which is God's Word. It is to pray in accord with the *mind* of the Spirit, which is God's Will.

And this is *why* Jesus taught us to pray. **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11** contain what we call "The Lord's Prayer". Actually, this is "Our Prayer", because Jesus told *us* to pray like this. The "Lord's Prayer" is over in **John 17**, because only Jesus can pray like that. But this should be the *basis* or the *pattern* of our prayers.

So we are not to simply pray willy-nilly, but we are to pray in accord with the issues that Jesus teaches in these Passages. Now it is important to understand that Jesus never said "*Repeat this Prayer*", or "*Memorize these words and recite them*". I suppose it isn't bad or wrong to do so, but the words of Jesus in this Passage should form the *way* we actually pray and not simply be something we repeat.

So, we are to pray like this. The *elements* that Jesus raises in this Passage should be the elements of our prayer life, those are the *issues* that should most concern us and that should occupy the *majority* of our prayers to God.

So, based on that, we see that genuine prayer is broken down into three parts:

- ✓ Worship
- ✓ Petitions
- ✓ Worship

Worship:

We should not begin prayer by asking for things, but by worshipping Who God is.

Our Father: Recognizing/remembering/celebrating that because of all that Jesus is and all that Jesus has done, God is our Father. We have been adopted into the Family of God, and God is no longer distant or

angry, and is now near and more eager to answer prayer than we are to pray.

Who is in Heaven: Recognizing/remembering/celebrating that God is above and we are beneath. This has to do with Who God is and what God has done.

Hallowed by Your Name: Recognize/remember/celebrate that God's Character or Reputation is pristine, holy, pure, righteous, and glorious. God is not a glorified Man, but is the one, true, and living God of the Universe, Creator, Sovereign, Lord. And He is now our Father.

Petitions

After we worship Who God is, and remember and celebrate Who God is, we then are told to bring some petitions to Him.

Your Kingdom Come: We are to pray that the Rule and Government that God began in Christ will come from Heaven to earth in completeness and fullness, that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord through the triumph of the Gospel. Here we are asking Jesus to come back

Your Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven: We are to ask God to do what is His Will on the earth with the same urgency and the same completeness that God's Will is carried out in Heaven. And this part involves us praying the many, many things that we know to be God's Will, such as:

- ✓ That the Gospel will be taught and learned.
- ✓ That the Gospel will be preached and taught
- ✓ That the Gospel will triumph.
- ✓ That the elect will hear and believe the Gospel; repent and trust in Jesus.
- ✓ That our children and families and neighbors and friends and co-workers will be saved.
- ✓ That the people of God's Church will be one, holy, universal, and apostolic.
- ✓ That the next generation will carry the torch forward.
- ✓ That godly and loving men will lead their families, spiritually.
- ✓ For our leaders, both spiritual and secular.

... and many other requests like this.

Give us this Day our Daily Bread: We are to ask for and trust that God will provide all that we need for that day, both naturally and spiritually.

Forgive us our Debts as we forgive our debtors: More than any other part, this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where much transformation and Sanctification takes place. Here we are to ask God to forgive our sins that we have committed against Him, which are many, but only to the degree that we ask God to forgive those who have sinned against us. In other words, we should ask God *not* to forgive us for our sins as long as we are unwilling to forgive those who have sinned against us. This is where we come to the place of having no human enemies on earth.

Do not lead us into Temptation but Deliver us from Evil: Here we pray about temptation and sin and evil, in all of its various forms.

Worship:

Then we complete our time with God with more Worship:

Yours is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen

Here we once again recognize/remember/ and celebrate Who God is and what God has done.

Now one of the things you will see as you yield yourself to praying in accord with God's Will is that praying like this takes time. It takes me less than a minute to read through or recite what we call "The Lord's Prayer". But it takes considerably *more* time for me to actually pray "in accord with" all the various elements in the Pattern for Prayer that Jesus gave. And that is precisely the point. This is how God sanctifies us through the discipline of Prayer.

Now Jesus never told us to "*Pray, 'in Jesus' Name*" while He was alive. And Jesus Himself never prayed that way. He didn't have to. But as the Epistles were written, we learned that we are to always pray "in the name of" or "through the Reputation of" or "because of the pristine Character of" Jesus Christ, because that is the only way sinful humans can get an audience with God.

We can only go to God through Jesus. We do not have a "one-on-one" relationship with God the Father. No one does. That is simply not

true. We have a “one-on-one” relationship with Jesus Christ, and He has a “one-on-one” relationship with God the Father.

So we come into God’s Presence in prayer by being bathed in Jesus’ Blood, covered in His Righteousness, asking for His Will to be carried out, to His Own Glory. And through the discipline of doing this on a consistent basis, we are changed and sanctified.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.