**February 3, 2019**

**Session 55 – Intelligent Communion**

It has become obvious that grace preachers and believers know quite a bit about what proper prayer is not, but they often struggle to know what it is.

I do not want us to be that way. I want us to have confidence in prayer because we know what prayer is, we know why we are praying (its purpose) and we know how to pray (what we should pray for), not just from memorizing some phrases from Paul’s prayers but because we truly understand the various kinds of prayer.

In our previous session:

* We corrected two wrong reasons for praying
  + Because we are commanded to pray
  + Because prayer is how we get God to do things for us
* We introduced proper prayer in accordance with its godly purposes
  + Relationship Prayer

The first purpose of prayer is the development of our relationship with God as our heavenly Father and us as His adopted sons. Therefore, we are calling this Relationship Prayer. We also talked about the mechanics of Relationship Prayer and we identified three component parts to it.

* **Acknowledgment:** This part of our prayer identifies the spiritual benefits which were given to us in Christ
  + **Mechanics:** Of course we can talk to God about those “spiritual blessings” corporately, but I encouraged you to focus on them one at a time.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all **spiritual blessings** in heavenly *places* **in Christ**:

* **Understanding:** This part of our prayer demonstrates that we understand the value of each spiritual blessing which was given to us in Christ. In other words, we can say why these “mercies of God” were given to us.

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.

* + **Mechanics:** This kind of praying gets these “mercies” entrenched in our thinking. These things occupy our thoughts, setting the stage for the next kind of praying. Also, the benefit of Relationship Praying gets us thinking about why God put us into Christ; taking us to core of what He wants to do with us.

Do you see what we have done here? We have defined some of the “spiritual blessings” we received “in Christ” and we also identified “the mercies of God” upon the basis of which, Paul beseeches us to present our bodies a living sacrifice; they include the things which were given to us “in Christ.”

Understanding the value of what has been given to us in Christ creates two things: 1) it causes our love for God to abound and 2) it makes us thankful, which the next part of the prayer.

**Thanksgiving:** This is the part of the prayer whereby we express gratitude for what was given to us in Christ.

The love and gratitude this kind of prayer produces provide the basis for our service as God’s adopted sons. We serve out of gratitude for what has been done for us and out of an ever-increasing love for our heavenly Father.

This kind of prayer can be done at any time, of course, but it fits nicely into that “prayer time” that we are all familiar with.

Now, let us look back at the outline of what we covered last session and see the next kind of prayer we learned.

In our previous session:

* We corrected two wrong purposes for why we should pray
* We introduced proper prayer in accordance with its godly purposes
  + Relationship Prayer
  + **Edification Prayer**

We are calling this Edification Prayer because this is a second purpose of prayer; turning our education into edification. Prayer is meant to be part of the process whereby edification takes place.



Prayer

**Education**

**Edification**

Prayer is the bridge between our positive and proper response to the education and the effectual working of the word to produce edification.

Now, with that review, let us continue with Edification prayer. Prayer, as it pertains to our edification unto godliness is best accomplished by “continuing instant in prayer” and “praying without ceasing.” By constantly and continually talking to our heavenly Father about the doctrine (by evaluating our thoughts, words and actions) in real time, we are engaging in the edification process all through the day.

Edification Prayer means we are having intelligent (informed) conversation with God about our own edification.

This kind of praying concerns the doctrine we have already learned as well as the doctrine we are studying at the time. This process of the doctrine working in us should always be taking place, but it will be especially so once we get to Romans 12 and engage in the education proper.

Edification prayer is the means by which we constantly evaluate our thoughts and actions by the doctrine. Therefore, it is part of the process whereby “the glory” is revealed in us; that glory referring to Christ living His life in us.

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**:

That “hope” is not a wishful thinking but a confidant expectation that Christ will be formed in us (by prayer and the effectual working of God’s word in us).

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with **the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

Edification praying requires that we understand the process by which edification is accomplished:

* + - We are confronted with the doctrine
    - We understand the doctrine
    - We believe the doctrine
    - We live out of the doctrine (Edification Prayer is part of this process)

Exactly how does prayer play a part in our living out of the doctrine? Answer: Prayer activates the doctrine, which is to say, prayer brings the doctrine to mind.

By continuing instant in prayer and by praying without ceasing, we are constantly talking to our Father about the doctrine we are learning AND we are evaluating our thoughts, words and deeds by the doctrine we have learned in real time.

Have you ever done something in the same way you have always done it only to think about it later and determine that you knew something that, if you had thought of it, would have changed your actions? Well, Edification Praying is meant to change that by bringing the doctrine to mind all through the day.

Recap:

Now, let us pull together what we have covered so far and see what we have. So far, we have two major reasons we pray:

1. Prayer is the means by which we develop an intimate Father/son relationship with God (To the extent we want to develop our relationship with God, we will engage in this kind of praying.)
2. Prayer is the means by which we turn our education into edification (constant, unceasing prayer is the catalyst which makes us mindful of doctrine as we go about our daily lives.) (To the extent we want to be edified unto godliness, we will engage in this kind of praying.)

We should be praying because we want these two things; we want a close, intimate relationship with our Father and we want to be edified. But those are not the only reasons why we pray; prayer has other purposes too.

Through the years, all kinds of pithy Christian “sayings” have been developed and people repeat them over and over until they are taken to be true. These sayings usually encapsulate some kind of understanding or belief.

One of those sayings was/is: Prayer Changes Things. This saying usually pertained to God intervening in the outward, physical circumstances of life. It meant to say that if we pray, God will intervene in our circumstances and change them. Because we understand the nature of prayer today, in this dispensation of Gentile grace, we know that is not the case. Therefore, it raises the question, “Does prayer change anything?” In the context of prayer moving God to intervene in the physical circumstances of life such as, changing the weather, making someone change their mind, or changing some bad circumstances, then the answer is “No, prayer does not change things in this DoGG.”

But, prayer does change things Therefore, this is the next subject I would like for us to look at.

Firstly, we do not pray in order for God to change our outward circumstances; we understand from Paul, that is not a purpose for prayer today.

While prayer will not persuade God to change our outward circumstances, when it is done properly, it will help change how those circumstances impact us. The changes which prayer will help effect are in our inner man. And I say, “will help” because prayer alone will not fully effect those inner man changes. Prayer is part of a process but it is not the entirety of the process. Those changes in our inner man are part of a process which includes our response to the doctrine and the subsequent working of the word in us, with prayer stuck between those two.

This leads us to correct a common misconception. In the old days, before we learned about prayer, we acted like all we had to do was pray and God would do the rest. This belief resulted in prayers for God to “bless” someone or intervene in some way for them, without us doing anything else.

An example of this is how people reacted to the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia. On December 26, 2004, an under-ocean earthquake (registering 9.1-9.3) caused a series of large tsunamis (waves of water) up to 100’ high. The surrounding coasts of the Indian Ocean were affected, killing an estimated 227,898 people in 14 countries. The Indonesian city of Banda Aceh reported the largest number of victims. Many more were left homeless.



U.S. Navy picture of a village demolished by one of those December, 2004 tsunami.

As you might imagine, there were major disruptions to living conditions and commerce and many people lost everything. Many people, hearing of such loss and devastation, wanted to do something to help those who survived. Therefore, they prayed for God to “bless” and “help” them.

As well intentioned as those prayers might have been, they did nothing to help anyone. It may have made the ones who prayed feel a little better, but even that was from a false sense of accomplishment. Prayer does not turn God into our Agent of change or our Messenger of blessing.

This kind of prayer comes out of the misconception that we can simply ask God to intervene in the physical circumstances of someone and He will do it.

The truth is, if we really wanted to help, then what should we do? We should go over there and help rebuild, or we could stay here but donate to some cause which is helping that situation on the ground over there. That would accomplish much more than just sitting over here asking God to “bless those poor people over there.”