

# Prayer for God's Glory

## Necessity of Prayer in Proclamation

1. We are not courageous enough in our own strength to proclaim the gospel
2. We cannot change hearts or effect any change in others to receive the Word with joy
3. The Holy Spirit, the gift of God, has been poured out upon the Church to achieve the purposes of God
  - a. The Holy Spirit's presence and the boldness to proclaim the gospel are linked by prayer
  - b. Acts 2:1-4; see also the constant devotion to prayer by the apostles/early church (Acts 2:42; 4:21ff; 6:4)
  - c. Every good work we do for the glory of God must be achieved by the "provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19)
4. John Piper, "God has made the spread of his fame hang on the preaching of the Word; and he has made the preaching of his Word hang on the prayers of the saints"
  - a. Luke 11:11-13
5. Jack Miller, "Here is an amazing Christian paradox: we who *have* the Holy Spirit must constantly *seek* his presence and his control of our lives by fervent prayer (Luke 11:5-13)."
  - a. Two errors:
    - i. Defend the Truth, God will do whatever He wants, so prayer is unimportant and evangelistic zeal is weakened
    - ii. Prayer should be extremely zealous and our emotional appeal actually manipulates God into giving us what He doesn't really want to give, or was at best very weakly interested in.
  - b. Both views, while having good points, fail to see the heresy involved
    - i. We need the Spirit's supply, so we must pray to proclaim
    - ii. We cannot manipulate God, so we must be careful in the way that we pray

## Immediate Purpose of Prayer: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

1. "To this end" – For this purpose we pray
2. God would make you worthy of His calling
  - a. In the gospels, "call" is an invitation
    - i. **Matt 22:1-14**
    - ii. **Luke 5:32** - I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.
  - b. In Paul's writings, however, God's "call" is always effective for salvation
    - i. **Rom 8:29-30**
    - ii. **Gal 1:15-16** - But when he who had set me apart before I was born,<sup>1</sup> and who called me by his grace,<sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to<sup>1</sup> me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles
    - iii. **2 Tim 1:9** - who saved us and called us to<sup>1</sup> a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,
  - c. Paul's prayer here is that God would make in actuality what God has already brought about by grace in our calling to Himself
    - i. **Eph 4:1** – "live a life worthy of the calling which you have received"
    - ii. We are called to Christ and blessed with every spiritual blessing in Him (Eph 1)
    - iii. We are also to live a life worthy of that calling in the way in which we walk
      1. **1 Pet 1:14-19** - As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,<sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,<sup>16</sup> since it is

written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

2. **2 Cor 7:1** - Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body<sup>1</sup> and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.
    - iv. By God's grace we have been forgiven, so walk like the forgiven (and pray for it, too!)
    - v. We were not worthy of the calling when we received it, but we pray that we would walk worthily of it now that we have received such a blessed calling to reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus Christ
  - d. Paul's prayer is not that we would be:
    - i. successful in career
    - ii. healthy
    - iii. intellectually brilliant
    - iv. happy
    - v. beautiful
    - vi. rich
  - e. Paul prays with eternity in view to the glory of God
    - i. What is eternal vs. what is temporal?
      1. Pray first for the eternal
      2. Pray for the temporal only to the extent to which it benefits the eternal
    - ii. "Your name be hallowed in all the earth"
    - iii. "Your Kingdom come and will be done"
    - iv. That we would walk in-line with the God who called us: holy, righteous, truthful, merciful, gracious, integrity, loving, self-sacrificial
    - v. With deep faith in Jesus
3. God would fulfill every resolve for good
- a. God has transformed every believer whom He has truly called to desire the *good*
    - i. New goals for Christ
    - ii. New purposes in Christ
    - iii. New Kingdom-view for the glory of Christ
  - b. Paul expects every believer to have these transformed affections
    - i. Not in perfection, but in "seed"
  - c. He prays that they would be fulfilled by God
    - i. "fulfilled" means to be completed
    - ii. God is growing our goodness, even our desire for goodness
    - iii. He does this through the dependent prayers of His people
4. God would fulfill every work of faith
- a. God's power is what prompts faith and completes the steps of faith
    - i. Are we asking God to fulfill our desire and works of faith?
    - ii. Dependence upon Jesus alone, rather than trusting in the idols of the heart
      1. Idols = things we trust in for satisfaction, salvation, goodness, rightness, reputation, honor, etc.
      2. Idols are usually good things that we make ultimate things

3. Are we asking God to rid us of the things that we trust in besides Him alone?
  - b. So Paul prays that the God-produced faith would be powerfully fulfilled in us
    - i. Unless the Lord builds the house, it's workers labor in vain (Ps 127:1)
    - ii. Unless the Lord fulfills our works of faith, they will remain unfulfilled and incomplete
    - iii. He is powerful to effect the transformation of faith and the works that proceed from faith by the power of His Spirit
    - iv. Great plans + Great prospects = Great petition (Bruce Milne)
5. Are we praying for the eternal things?
- a. What does God desire for His kingdom?
  - b. What should I be risking for the sake of His kingdom?
  - c. What do I need to be asking for to accomplish His purposes?

## Ultimate Purpose of Prayer:

1. Prayer seeks the glory of Jesus Christ as the Lord
  - a. The ultimate purpose and goal of our prayers is the glory of Jesus Christ
    - i. Not our glory, reputation, comfort, purposes
    - ii. But the reputation, glory, and purposes of Jesus Christ
      1. Is the goal of our good works and acts of faith?
      2. Is this, then, the goal of our prayers?
      3. When other things supersede this purpose, then we dishonor God and our prayers are unfulfilled
        - a. **James 4:2-3**  
You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
        - b. **1 John 5:14**  
And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
        - c. If people's comfort supersedes the glory of Christ in our ministry and in our prayers, then we have corrupted the salvation we enjoy and walk unworthily of our calling
    - iii. God's glory and reputation is built up through the proclamation of the Word and the humble prayers of His people
      1. In our prayers, God gets the glory of all success, and we get the supplication that we need in order to glorify Him
      2. God's glory is revealed through the gospel proclamation, and for this we pray with fervency
        - a. **Luke 18:1** - And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.
        - b. **John 14:13** Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
  - b. The gospel is the heart of the glory of Christ
    - i. The prayers which honor God are centered around the glory of Christ in the gospel
    - ii. Are we asking God to cause the growth of the gospel in our hearts, through our praise, and into all the earth?

1. We pray according to our view of God: A.W. Tozer quote:  
 “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...the gravest question before the church is always God himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like....Always the most revealing thing about the church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about him or leaves unsaid....Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might be able to predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we might be able with some precision to foretell where the church will stand tomorrow.”
- iii. We must learn to repent of our self-honor, even in our prayers, and turn again to the glory of Christ as the center of our existence and of our walk. We have been called to honor the King.

2. Prayer also seeks the glorification of the saints in the glory of Christ

- a. Not the same glory that belongs to God alone
  - i. **Is 42:8** – “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor my praise to idols.”
  - ii. **Is 48:11** – For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another
  - iii. **Ezek 36:22b** – It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.
- b. There is a proper glorification of the saints which glorifies God
  - i. **Rom 8:29-30**
  - ii. **2 Cor 3:18** – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
  - iii. We are being formed, presently, into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit
    1. As we give to Christ what is rightfully His (worship, glory), we are transformed into His image
    2. Ultimately, in our completed redemption of resurrection, we will be like Him
      - a. **1 John 3:2** - Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears<sup>1</sup> we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
    3. Even now, to the degree to which we glorify Christ, we are made into His image, from glory to glory by the power of the Holy Spirit
      - a. The transformation of our character and our behavior to being in-line with Him is honoring to Him because He is the One working it out within us and through us.
      - b. So, as we are glorified as belonging to Him, He gets the glory of our transformed hearts into the character of Christ
      - c. **Is 62:11-12** – The redeemed ones are the Lord’s reward
- c. There is a strong relationship between prayer, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and transformation of our hearts into line with the purposes of God
  - i. **Luke 11:11-13** - What father among you, if his son asks for<sup>1</sup> a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give

good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

- ii. **Rom 8:26-27** - Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because <sup>1</sup> the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
- iii. Are we praying to see this glory of the saints grow to the glory of God?
  1. Do we pray for Christ's character to be formed in His saints by the power of the Holy Spirit within us?
  2. Do we ask for the transformation of faith in others?
    - a. Fidelity of doctrine (orthodoxy)
    - b. Purity of life (orthopraxy)
    - c. Gospel transformation of repentance and faith in Jesus

### 3. All according to the grace of our God and Christ

- a. Our prayer is not that we would all simply try harder
  - i. We "bear fruit", we don't create it
  - ii. He is the vine from which all of our fruit grows...but it does grow!!! And it grows in those who ask Him!!!
    1. **Matt 16:18** – "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."
    2. What fruit do you want to see grow to the glory of Jesus? ASK HIM TO PRODUCE IT!!
- b. We only try harder and are transformed because God is working in us by His grace
  - i. **Phil 1:6** – "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"
  - ii. **Phil 2:13** – "it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure"
  - iii. **Col 1:9-10** - And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
  - iv. **2 Tim 1:13-14** - Follow the pattern of the sound <sup>1</sup> words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
  - v. **Jude 1:20-21** - But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; <sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.
- c. God gets all the glory in prayer:
  - i. God is the only one who can transform hearts, enliven affections, and change minds by the power of His sovereign Spirit
  - ii. If we don't believe that God is the one who changes hearts and transforms minds, why would we pray at all?
    1. that the glory of God would be in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever (Eph 3:21)
    2. now, father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was (John 17:5, Jesus praying)
    3. Our father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9)

4. Abba, father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will (Mark 14:36)

Conclusion:

Prayer and the Spirit are the inseparable powerhouse accomplishing God's gracious and sovereign plan of the redemption of persons from all the nations of the earth. Our passion for His glory, His reputation, His honor, His praise, is poured forth in prayer. Prayer asking for His name to be renowned in all the earth, for our hearts to be transformed into the image of Jesus, the gospel to take root in the hearts of those from among the nations, and for the Holy Spirit to powerfully work out the plan and purpose of God. Does this mean that we only ask for the eternal things? No, but we make all other requests secondary and subsistent to the revealed Word of God. Jesus asked for the cup to pass from him, so we, too, may ask the Lord for what we desire. However, we must also keep in the forefront of our minds and therefore in our prayers the great glory of the Almighty God. It is Him we desire to be worshiped, and so it is with great dependent vigor that we cry out to Him so that He will move mightily among us and through us and glorify His name in all the earth.