

Intro: In the interaction at the gate of Bethlehem we have seen the glorious consummation of the redemptive romance. Boaz has redeemed Ruth and declared this redemption to all that would listen in the gate. The response of all the people in the gate was twofold: to witness, which we looked at last week, and to pray. Here it is that the people of Bethlehem pray for the blessing of Ruth and for the blessing of Boaz. They pray that the LORD would make Ruth as fruitful as Leah and Rachel, the mothers of the nation of Israel, therefore including this Moabitess into the covenant people of the LORD. They pray that Boaz would be praised and honored in all the land for his taking of this woman, and that his house would be strong and mighty like his ancestor Perez of the line of Judah. They also pray that their offspring would be the bringer of this strength and glory.

Boaz and Ruth's offspring did bring strength and glory, and even in greater measure the redemption of those whom He loved. Jesus Christ, of Bethlehem, the Great Redeemer has come and redeemed His bride, the Church. We, too, are called to respond like those in the gate: with witness to the greatness of the redemption, and with prayer for the glory of the Bride and for the glory of the Redeemer. Today, we look at biblical prayer's goals: the glory of Christ and the building up of the Church according to the grace of God.

1. Prayer seeks the glory of Jesus Christ as the Lord

- a. Prayer for Boaz:
 - i. "work valor" in Ephrathah
 - ii. "be renowned" in Bethlehem
 - iii. Have a strong house (like Perez) through your offspring
- b. 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 that Jesus would be seen and worshipped?
 - a. Is this, then, the goal of our prayers?
 2. 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. ³You 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.
 3. When prayer is active in the hands of those working for the glory of God in Missions it glorifies God. When missions are pursued without prayer is glorifies man and his programs.

- c. The gospel of redemption is the heart of the glory of Christ
 - i. The prayers which honor God are centered around the glory of Christ in the gospel
 - 1. Sinners rescued by the blood of His cross and given the life of Christ through His resurrection from the dead (1 Cor 15:3-5; Gal 1:1-5; Heb 10:19-22)
 - 2. Witness and prayer are inextricably linked in glorifying God.
 - a. **“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” (Piper)**
 - ii. Are we asking God to cause the growth of the gospel in our hearts, through our praise, and into all the earth?
 - 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 Seeks the Glorification of the Saints in the Glory of Christ

- a. Of Ruth:
 - i. May she be like Rachel and Leah
 - i. Mothers of the 12 tribes of Israel
 - ii. Inclusion of Ruth into Israel here
 - iii. The greatest women of Israel
 - ii. May she be honored and revered
- b. 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.
- c. There is a proper glorification of the saints which glorifies God
 - i. **Rom 8:29-30** – For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
 - 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 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. **Ephesians 3:13** – So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- d. **Is 62:11-12** – Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." ¹² And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.
- d. 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 a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ 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. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because 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, ¹⁰ 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 words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ 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; ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.
 - c. Drawing People to Himself is the Work of God
 - i. **John 10:16** – And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
 - ii. **John 6:37** – All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
 - iii. We Preach so that Others Believe, but it is Christ that Gathers His Sheep

- d. God gets all the glory in prayer, pursuit, and salvation of people:
 - 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 will of God that has been given to us in His Word. 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.

Remember, remember, remember that our goal is not merely missions, but rather it is that God would be known and glorified for the great God that He is. We are in a battle, a war, with conflict without and conflict within. Struggle is the word that would sum up much of how we live in this society. Even Paul struggled to be who he wanted to be. We all struggle because the Spirit of God within is battling the flesh and all of its self-centered desires. We need His great and infinite power to proclaim Him truthfully and we need His great and infinite power in order to be transformed into witnesses of His great glory. WE NEED HIS PRESENCE AMONG US!

"Our fallen hearts are predisposed to think that we can 'do church.' But we only think that way if we're task-oriented to begin with. Real 'church' is not running a program; real church is the manifest presence of Jesus among His people. And we can't program Him. We can only pray for His presence." ~Ray Ortlund

Prayer brings us into the necessary power behind our witness and the revelation of the Glory of God: His Spirit, His power, His Glory. Like all others who have been called by God to reveal to the world His glorious gospel, we have been given His very presence to accomplish the impossible task of witnessing and proclaiming His glory to the world. Remembering these two promises: that nobody is beyond God's reach, for "all things are possible with Him," and that you are never called by God to do something that Jesus will not be with you to do, for after He commanded us to witness of Him, He gave us this promise of comfort and assurance: "I will be with you always, even to the end of the ages." Go audaciously and ask for all the spiritual, emotional, and physical resources necessary to witness to the great news of Jesus Christ to the glory of our great God and Savior!