

Online Grace Bible School

With
Ken Legg, Australia

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www.kenlegg.com.au

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 4
New Covenant Prayer**

1) Aligning Ourselves with the Purposes of God

Mt.7:7-11. Often Paul speaks of himself as a pattern for believers. He is a pattern in many ways: in his revelation of truth, childlike faith, experience of the power of the indwelling Christ, devotion and love to Jesus, passion and boldness in missionary zeal, etc. Also in prayer. What can we learn from Paul's prayer life?

Some popular concepts of prayer are unbiblical, unhelpful and not glorifying to God. We are not 'storming the gates of heaven'. There is no such thing as 'prayer that unlocks Heaven'. 2000 years ago Jesus unlocked heaven with 3 words 'It is finished!' **Rom.8:32.**

Insight: Eph.1:16-19. Paul prayed that we would know what we have already received. So we don't ask:

- ✓ To be blessed. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing, He has given all things for life/ godliness
- ✓ For love, joy, peace, patience, etc. You have a living well inside you...draw from it.
- ✓ For material blessing. Seek first the God's kingdom and righteousness and He will supply all our need
- ✓ For protection. Psa.91.
- ✓ For His presence. He said He will never leave you.
- ✓ For the anointing. You are anointed.
- ✓ For victory. You have it.

Asking God to give us what He has already given us is like sitting at a table full of food and complaining that we are hungry! Instead, ask Him to show you what He has given you. Then appropriate these by faith. Faith receives what grace supplies. Everything has been given by grace. Faith does not make God do more.

Insight: *'...night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you'* (1 Thes.3:10-11). He prays that he might see them again and supply what was lacking in their faith. Their lack was not a result of their rebellion but ignorance. He hadn't been with them long enough to impart what was necessary.

What about our daily needs? Daily bread? Circumstances? **Mt.7:7-11.** Notice that Jesus said:

1) Everyone who asks receives. But is that true? Or do some get lucky & others miss out? There is one way your prayers are guaranteed to be answered ...when we ask for God's will to be done, (1 John 5:14-15).

2) Our Father will give us 'good' things. There is a discrepancy between how Paul prayed and our prayers. Our prayers are often

- ✓ A 'wish list'.
- ✓ A 'fix list'.

Many, many times God does answer these prayers. But not these are not Paul's themes and not always good for us. How do you know what's good for you?

God provided a whole garden of fruit trees for Adam and Eve to partake from. But they were forbidden to eat from one tree. Then they were persuaded that the forbidden fruit was 'good' (Gen.3:6).

Prayer is meant to be an environment where we receive the good that God has for us, not a place where we try to take something that is going to be bad for us. We want to pray ourselves and others out of things that God may want to use. Prayer is aligning myself with the purposes of God.

How do you know what is good or bad for you? **Insight:** (Rom.8:26&27).

Aaron and Hur a picture of the 2 divine intercessors.

Jesus our High Priest is on that side of heaven: *'It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us'* **Rom.8:34.** The altar sanctifies the gift.

The Holy Spirit is on this side of heaven (i.e. earth): He helps us to pray according to the will of God.

2) What Does God Want?

1 Jn.5:14-15. Our motivation in prayer: 'What does God want?' We usually focus on deliverance or supply (fix list and wish list). The Holy Spirit wants to help us re-focus by helping us to see the big picture. E.g. *'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you'* (Matt.6:33).

The big picture: EARTH – WORLD – KINGDOM. God loves the Kingdom. It is what He is building, 1 Jn.2:15-17.

God is the centre of creation. Remove Him from the centre, and you will lose gravity, spin out of control and self-destruct. God's purposes are the very centre of spiritual gravity. Prayer is an opportunity to align ourselves with these.

There are 2 ways we can pray. 1) Carnal. That's when it puts me in the centre; 2) Spiritual. That's when we ask, 'What does God want?' Jesus prayed: *'Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name'* (Jn.12:27-28).

At the end of His life Jesus said, *'I have glorified you on the earth'* (John 17:4). What a way to sum up your life! Like Jesus we can pray two different prayers: *'Father, save me!'* or *'Father, glorify your name.'*

'Father, glorify your name' is the prayer that God always answers. How God chooses to glorify His name may be by saving us; but maybe not.

Carnal prayer: Begins with us...through God...back to us. Peter was 'Not mindful of the things of God...' The carnal mind is enmity towards God, James 4:3. See also James 4:4-5.

Spirit-led prayer asks, 'What does God want?' Spiritual prayer begins with God, passes through us and ends with God. Abraham and Sodom. God took Abraham into His counsel to involve him in His purposes.

Prayer is like electric circuit. Starts and ends with God. *'For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen'* (Rom.11:36).

The message of NC prayer is not that you can have everything you believe for and you can be delivered from everything that makes your life unhappy. It is: 'whatever you are going through Jesus is enough!'

Some may ask: 'If God is going to fulfill His purposes anyway, what is the use of praying?'

- ✓ Elijah prophesied rain, but still prayed for it.
- ✓ Daniel understood the time of release from captivity but still prayed for it.
- ✓ Prayer aligns us with the purposes of God. Prayer does not change the will of God. It does not get Him to change His purposes and get new purposes. It takes us into His counsel so that we flow with Him.
- ✓ Prayer disarms our self-interest and affirms our trust that the Father who loves us so deeply knows us better than we know ourselves. 'Father, may the purpose for which you have created me and placed me where you have in the world be fulfilled completely.'

3) Seeing the Big Picture

Do our prayers for our friends and loved ones line up with God's purposes for them?

As we have seen that new covenant prayer for ourselves is vastly different to much of modern-day prayer so it is with Paul's prayers for others. The goal of many of modern prayers is for temporal benefits and blessings. The goal of his prayers was for spiritual benefits. For example, Gal.4:19; 1 Thes.5:23-24.

Remember, he was governed by the big picture – the kingdom of God, the glory of God. When he prayed for people his prayers were shaped by the ultimate purpose God has for them. We are 'the called according to His purpose'. He said all things work together for good, i.e. with this purpose in mind. Don't confuse the means with the end. 'So that...' Rom.1:9-11; 15:13; Eph.3:16-19; Phil.1:9-11; 2 Thes.1:11-12.

Col.1:3-14

1:3-4. Paul prays for Christians he has never met (1:9). He prays for 2 things: 1) their faith in Christ Jesus and, 2) their love to all the saints.

They are the only 2 commandments under the NC. *'And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us'* (1 John 3:23-24).

- ✓ There are only two requirements that God has for us in an imperfect world - faith in Him and love for others.
- ✓ If we can believe that God loves us perfectly in spite of our behavior then we can love others perfectly too. Paul looked for the growth of these two things in all the churches.
- ✓ These two things do not happen synonymously. They are sequential. Love rises out of faith.
- ✓ 2 Pet.1:5-7. Love is the bond of perfection. It is the goal. But it can only come from faith, 1 Tim.1:5.
- ✓ Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. So when Paul said he wanted to come to the Romans to impart a spiritual gift, he meant he wanted to come to them with Apostolic teaching of God's Word.
- ✓ He prays for the Thessalonians the same he prayed for the Romans, i.e. that he might come to them and impart a spiritual gift, i.e. a truth to believe in that will change their lives forever. *'For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe'* (1 Thes.2:13).

This is what Paul prayed and worked for and so should we

'Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love' (1 Thes.3:6).

'We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other' (2 Thes.1:3&4).

'I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints' (Philemon 5).

4) Room Service or Battle Communications?

Paul asks for prayer for himself. *'Brethren, pray for us'* (1 Thes.5:25). He proclaimed the gospel of grace but he knew that prayer is the hand that wields the Sword of the Spirit *'...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word'* (Acts 6:4). We sow and water but God gives the increase.

John Piper says prayer is like a walkie-talkie on a battlefield, not an intercom for room service. The Christian life is spiritual warfare. We need this wartime mentality. What do we ask our Commander in Chief for?

1. We ask for reconnaissance and surveillance to open doors

The Holy Spirit is the One who opens and closes doors for ministry, Acts 16:6-9. *'...meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains'* (Col.4:3). We knock on doors, but God opens them. Knock; don't kick!

In evangelism the Bible speaks not of people but 'peoples', i.e. nations (*ethne*). See Psalm 67. *'Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession'* (Psa.2:8). *'And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us'* (Acts 17:26-27).

2. Troop deployment

- ✓ Getting the right people to the battle scene. *'Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'* (Matt.9:38). The right people in the right place at the right time. Acts 13:1-3.
- ✓ It requires prayer. *'...without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established'* (Rom.1:9-11). *'...meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you'* (Philem.1:22).
- ✓ Pray for those whom God has anointed for the task. *'Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia'* (2 Cor.2:12-13).

3. Aerial cover

- ✓ Whenever there is an open door there is opposition. *'But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries'* (1 Cor.16:8-9).
- ✓ We pray for aerial cover that we might have boldness in the face of opposition. *'Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word'* (Acts 4:29).
- ✓ Pray for boldness for the Word to be proclaimed by those who are called to preach and teach it and by all Christians. *'Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints'* (Rom.15:30-31).
- ✓ Pray that we are not muzzled or sidetracked by issues and agendas within the church. *'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith'* (2 Thes.3:1-2).
- ✓ Pray for favour from our civil leaders, Tim.2:1-4.

4. Healing for wounded soldiers

'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.' (Jas.5:16). Healing from offences, moral failure, and discouragement.

5. Supplies

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God' (Phil.4:6). Resources. Finances.