

The Prayer of Authority

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding prayer as a means to glorify God and the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in salvation and Christian living.

Duration: 1:10:08

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:4-14

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by introducing the topic and inviting the audience to join next Sunday for further discussion. He then leads the congregation in a prayer, asking God to save them from relying on their own natural abilities and instead depend on His grace. The preacher goes on to discuss the importance of understanding God's primary purpose, which is to bring glory to His grace. He contrasts this with the concept of reverence for life, stating that while it is noble, it falls short of the true purpose of Christianity, which is to bring glory to God.

Transcript

Will you return to Ephesians chapter 1, our theme this morning, the prayer of authority. We have, as you know, in the past weeks been dealing with aspects of prayer related to Ephesians 6, 18, wherein we are told that we are to pray always with all prayer, all kinds, all forms, all manners of prayer. And so it would be incomplete to deal with this subject of prayer without giving attention to the matter before us today, the prayer of authority.

But I want you to notice in this first chapter of Ephesians the protective preface that is given to us by the Spirit of God. If you have pencil and would like to so do, you can more or less analyze the first 14 verses by underlining the portion of three verses. I refer to verse 6, wherein you read that we are, he has predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Everything the Father has done in eternity past, this has been his prime motive and his basic reason, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Everything that you would do in prayer and everything that you would experience in prayer must of necessity be understood to be related to this, God's primary purpose, that there should be glory brought to the praise of the glory of his grace. He should be glorified thus in his graciousness on our behalf.

Now if you'll return to verse 12, you will notice that this has reference to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first six verses referring to the work of God as Father before the foundation of the world, and verses 7 on through 12 referring to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in Christ, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ. Everything that the Father has done through the Lord Jesus Christ again has this same motivation, the praise of his glory.

Now you need to understand this, to understand the work of Christ. There is unfortunately a humanism that is crept into much of evangelical Christianity. A humanism, I say, which says that the prime purpose of all God's dealing is the benefit of men.

Obviously men benefit, but if the gospel is preached in such a way that it seems as though God's only concern is for the needs of men, it's a mistake. There is also the purpose that God be glorified because it is infinite work, the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted because it is measureless grace. And the reason why we ought to press sinners to flee from the wrath to come and throw down the arms of their rebellion and sue for peace with the Lord Jesus Christ is not only thereby they live, but they render to the Lord Jesus Christ the glory that in their rebellion and sin of which they've deprived him.

It's imperative that we see thus, that all of his working in the Lord Jesus Christ is that we, we, you should be to the praise of his glory. Your life, your transformed life, your witnessing life, your conformity to the image of Christ, all I say that it should be to the praise of his glory. Then if you will notice verses 13 and 14 have reference to the work of the Holy Spirit.

For you see it is God as Father who purposed our salvation and God as Son who provided our salvation. But it is God as Holy Spirit who perfects in us all that the Father purposed and all that the Son provided. So it is that the Holy Spirit should be glorified.

Notice now as I read verses 13 and 14, and as you've underlined the first clause in the sixth verse, the first clause in the twelfth verse, you will underline the last clause in the fourteenth verse when we come to it. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory. Thus it is the work of the Spirit of God to awaken sinners and convict them and bring them to repentance and faith, regenerate them, seal them, keep them, cause them to grow in the grace and likeness of Christ.

And you in that day are to be to the praise of his glory, to God the Spirit for his faithful ministry in your behalf. Thus all that transpires in all of God's dealings in grace and love is that God be glorified. We've pointed out in the past that Albert Kreutzer with all due regard for his great achievement has been able through all the years he's lived and walked and worked and taught to arrive at a philosophy of life as noble as it is infinitely short of this.

For it is said by those who've recently been with him that he is still living consistently with that philosophy that he formed years ago as in one of his first visits he was on a steamer going up the breast of the broad Congo River watching the hunters, the Belgian officials, as they would shoot at the crocodile lying on the bank with their high-powered rifles, see them spring into the air when shot and then go off to die. And appalled by this waste of life he found in this the three words which have been the epitome of his philosophy, reverence for life. Now as good as it is, as noble as it is, it is still infinitely short of that which you've just read.

Reverence for life will have humanitarian benefit, certainly, but it is also going to be a far cry from the simplest principles of revelation. And I submit to you that if your primary concern for the gospel is only that sinners escape hell and go to heaven, that you are living on the plateau of reverence for life, for human life and its eternal destiny. But when the eyes of your understanding have been opened to see that in Christianity you have an entirely other, a completely different philosophical point of view as well as historical purpose, then you see that there is a vertical element here that's tremendously important, namely, the glory of God, the glory of God as Father, the glory of God as Son, the glory of God as Holy Spirit, the praise of the glory of his grace.

We should be to the praise of his glory, unto the praise of his glory. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, hear, give to us insight into the very genius of Christianity. And everything that God does in you, he does for the praise of the glory of his grace.

Everything that he does through you, he does for the praise of the glory of his grace. Everything he does in the church is for the praise of the glory of his grace. Every answer to prayer is for the praise of the glory of his grace.

And every test for the likeness of prayer is this, to the praise of the glory of his grace. You have thus a measuring stick by which you can test all activities and all opportunities, all tests, all privileges, all recreation. The whole of life now has been brought under the length of a measuring stick by which it can be tested for its brightness in time and its value for eternity.

Is this to the praise of the glory of his grace. It's wonderful to have a principle simple enough to grasp, clear enough to understand, long enough to stretch over every possible change and test that will come to us. And it gives you great courage, I am sure, when you realize that as the matter of your business principles are concerned, and your home life is concerned, in every area, every opportunity, every test and problem, you have this as the yardstick by which you can explore whether or not it is right, is it, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Now, it's extremely important, I call this the preface that protects, because it brings us face to face with the fact that what all that he has to say to Paul, everything through Paul to the church at Ephesus and to us, is first prefaced by this. And we know that whatever is said will refer back to it and never go past it. And therefore there is nothing in God's dealing with you, as it's set forth here or elsewhere, that must not be referred to this.

It must, it absolutely must be referred back to this one test that we've seen for these moments. But notice, Paul is greatly concerned about this church. And so, discovering that they have been born of God, and realizing that they have genuinely passed from death to life, he lets them know through the letter that he is praying that they may have the eyes of their understanding open, that they may realize some things that they will not realize unless they are taught of God.

It is, I am sure, the fact that the church has languished in the centuries since the earliest days of its history, because the eyes of the members of the church have not been open to see the things which are set forth so clearly here. It's quite easy for one to memorize the first chapter of Ephesians, or the entire book as I have known many to do, without having insight into the principles that are so clearly set forth in this first chapter. Paul writes to these people whom he calls saints at Ephesus, whom he calls faithful in Christ Jesus, of whose faith he can speak commendably, and for whom he can give thanks to the Father.

Now this is good, and this ought to be appreciated by us. In your case, if this is true of you, you ought to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. But none of us ought to be content to stay there, born again, forgiven, pardoned, knowing that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Good! But if this is the beginning and not the end, this is but the matriculation into the school of grace, rather than the graduation. This is but putting you on the ground where you can begin to learn. Certainly it's not putting into your hand the diploma that releases you to go from school.

He's saying to these people, I'm so delighted for what the Lord has done, and that you know he has done, and how delighted you must be. But don't stop there. Realize that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, wants to cause the Spirit of God to become to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

There's a Spirit of wisdom telling you how to use what's yours, and there's the Spirit of a revelation or apocalypse on or unveiling, showing you what's yours. Then he makes perfectly clear in these next verses that there is a principle of Christian life, a principle of Christian living, relationship with God, that is so significant that unless it is clearly understood, the life of the Christian, though he be a saint at Ephesus and a faithful brother, must be lived on a rather infantile level until the eyes of his understanding are open to see this, which is so important for the people of God. There are three things that he shows.

First, the hope of his calling. And we have sought to define this in the light of Romans 12, 1 and 2, where we are told that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God. Now, put it this way, this does not say the hope to which you were called as a Christian, but the hope to which our Lord Jesus responded.

The word hope means reasonable expectation based upon valid ground. Now when the Lord answered the call to leave heaven and come into the earth, he had hope, he had reasonable expectation based upon valid ground, that there would be those that the Father had given to him who would come to him, and his death would not be in vain. He knew that.

But he not only knew that there would be those who were saved, but he also had reasonable expectation and valid hope that something would happen in the lives of those that benefited from his death. And so he called it here the hope of his calling, the expectation Christ had that when men and women realized that they couldn't save themselves by their own efforts, they couldn't redeem themselves by their own service or ceremony, that they were utterly dependent upon the free sacrifice of God's dear Son, that they would likewise recognize that if they could not save themselves, neither could they effectively live the Christian life in their own energy and strength and power. It is thus that I would interpret the hope of his calling to mean the confident expectation that Christ had that everyone redeemed by his grace would realize that in and of themselves they did not possess the kind of ability necessary to live a life that would glorify Christ, that they would take their place in union with him in death, experiencing inwardly the death that was historically fixed when they died with Christ, and then they would present their bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord, inviting the Lord Jesus Christ to live in them his own life.

We hear this, present your body a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. But we understand that Romans 12 follows Romans 6, and you cannot present your body as a vehicle for the Lord Jesus to live through you his life until you've presented yourself to the cross. For if you have not done this and do not live in the light of the cross, then you will be certain indeed that you are going to take matters into your own hands and frequently when you would have, that he would have had

right to have expected that he'd be free to do any as he wished, you would have taken the steering wheel in your hands and chosen the road you would have followed.

So it must be that Romans 12 follows Romans 6. It's involved in the hope of his calling, the expectation that he had that you'd know that you couldn't, and only he could, and you'd present your body to him that he might live in you his life. Then we see further that he has told us that we are to know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. You remember the Lord Jesus said to that company from which he took leave, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall receive power and ye shall be witnesses unto me.

We might put it this way, that everything God does in the believer and for the believer and everything God does in the church and for the church is to enable the Christians to be nourished and strengthened to become what they ought to be by their corporate life, one with another and with the risen head Christ, in order that they can be the vessels and vehicles for the revelation of how wonderful the Lord Jesus is, both in his person and in his purpose. In his person the church is to be enamored with Christ and with no lesser personalities. We are to gather to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to see the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is to be the center of our meeting, the object of all of our worship and all of our understanding. Our lives in absolute submission to him and lived in absolute dependence upon him. But as we have thus brought ourselves to him in abandonment, he brings himself to us in empowerment.

And we are to go forth into the community, into that world that he loved and for which he died, and to be the vehicles by which it can be revealed how wonderful Jesus Christ is. By our lives, lived under his power by partaking of his nature and his own strength, and by our words spoken with the anointing of the Spirit of God, making these words to be quick and effective. But the end of all of this is his inheritance in the saints.

Again we see the conflict between humanism and Christianity. Much of missionary endeavor and evangelistic effort is put forth in order that poor sinners may go to heaven instead of hell. But as we understand the nature of sin and the character of sinners, we discover that they, and us as well included, fully deserve hell.

And that we must not ever think that we are serving, as it were, to improve on the justice of God. The reason for our going to sinners and pleading with them to repent and to turn to Christ is not only that in their so doing they will escape hell and go to heaven, but that in so doing they will render to the Lord Jesus Christ the homage and the honor that he ought to have had. For a sinner is living in open treasonous rebellion against the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

And we plead with him not only to cease from his sin in order that he should escape the consequences of his crimes, but that he should cease in his crimes and that he should render to Jesus Christ our wonderful Lord, the one whom God by his right hand has exalted, to be prince and savior, the honor which is his due. And thus we understand that when sinners repent, it isn't only that they will get good, but Jesus Christ will get glory. And we're doing it not only for the sinner's sake, but for the Savior's sake.

And there's all the difference in the world in your evangelism and your witness if you're doing it for the Lord Jesus Christ. If you see that the reason for it is that he should receive the reward of his suffering, then there's something that's happened in you and you care not whether this person likes you or not, and you care not whether they're nice to you or not, and if they spit in your face, you wipe the spittle away because after all you're not there for their sake anyway. You're there for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

And your concern isn't that you win a popularity conference, but that he gets the glory that he so abundantly deserves. And so you're perfectly willing to be unpopular if he can be the one that's put into the eyes of the sinner. And somehow, even though they must walk on you to reach him, it's possible for them thus to come to the place that they bow before the nail-pierced feet of the Son of God and render to the Lord Jesus Christ that which he deserves.

Their repentance and their faith, their love, their worship and their obedience. And one day, he's going to reach down across the ages and gather all the redeemed and give them new bodies as they've already received new natures and new life in the Spirit. He'll give them new names and a new robe.

And then, gathered from every kindred, tribe and tongue and nation, they will be presented to Christ as the reward of his suffering. And you need to see this in your praise. Furthermore, you need to see that it is not in the mere energy of your own personality that this witness and this prayer is to be offered.

But it is quite the contrary. It is in the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because you've presented yourself to the cross and because you've presented your body to him and because the reason for all your ministry is the glory of Christ through the salvation of the law, then you have released the resurrection power of Christ to be manifest through you.

And thus it is that we read that we might know what is the greatness of his power to us who are to believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him and you from the dead. And thus we're to understand that the ministry that's to be performed to us as a church, whether it be in witness or be in prayer, is not what we do for the Lord in what we are, but it is what he does through us in what he is. And this makes all the difference in the world.

Then it isn't a question, well, I don't know that I'm going to have the kind, I have the kind of courage or stamina that it takes to spend the night in prayer. But if it's you just somehow trying to win a marathon on your knees, then of course there's not a great deal of value in this. But when you recognize that the Christian life is not your life vainly lived in the energy of your personality for Christ, but the life of Christ manifests in you, in the vigor and power and vitality of what he is, it's altogether different.

This is what he wants you to see. Now you say, you haven't even come to the theme yet and the time is almost gone. Well, be that as it may, I'd rather get the foundation established so that you can see where we're going than to talk about the superstructure so you can't see what's involved in it.

We'll have to deal probably with some of the aspects that are from our hearts subsequently. But it is imperative that you understand, it's absolutely essential that you understand that in God's economy, if the glory is to come to his grace and to his Son and to the Spirit, if this is to be done, it has to be done on these principles. Of utter abandonment of yourself to the cross and your body to the Lord, that the end is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the energy is the resurrection life of Christ manifest through you.

Whether it be in your home, where the chores to which you become sometimes just a little bit weary because they seem to be repeated so often and so necessary that no sooner have you cooked than you must clean and no sooner have you cleansed the dishes than you must cook again. And sometimes I'm sure it must be just greatly wearying. But at the same time, remember that it isn't just a meal you're getting or it isn't just a task you're performing, whether it's in the factory or the home or school or office.

If you have rightly related yourself to this which is the genius of Christianity and the primary purpose of your being, the glory of God in Jesus Christ, then it gives you but not such just a task that you have to perform, drudgery through which you must trudge, but it is that you have an opportunity to glorify him. And it is his resurrection life available to you, Mother, in the home or you working in the office or the school or you in the shop or factory. It is the resurrection life of Christ that is to be manifested in and flow through your redeemed, cleansed, presented body and personality that's going to make the difference between somehow and triumphantly, living just to get through or living for the glory of God.

It is going to make the difference between praying because it's incumbent upon you that you pray or praying in the liberty and the power and the anointing of God. And everything in the Christian's life, therefore, is to be under the dynamic, under the energy, the enabling of the resurrection power of Christ. And it's not to be a sort of draining down with a little sponge of our determination to soak up a little energy of enthusiasm or talent that we were given by nature and there to just squeeze it out drop by drop.

This isn't his plan. But it's for you to recognize that all that we were given by nature, all that we inherited as part of the natural structure of our personalities and beings is inadequate, whether it be much or little, for the task that's before us. The kind of life we're called to live, the kind of witness we're called to bear is a life which can only be lived, a witness which can only be born by the full flow of the resurrection life of Christ.

And this, when we understand it, and this, when we see it, takes everyone out of the category of just being somebody. Well, I'm just a Christian, or I'm just a layman, or I'm just this or I'm just that. And forever after, when you won't see that Jesus Christ intended that there should be through you the flow of all he is, you can't just be somebody anymore because you've been taken completely out of the category of just being a Christian or a layman or a anything else.

You've been brought into a vital living union with the living God, and every life was to be thus related to him. And that every life was to have some ministry, not all, of course, to have the same ministry or function, but all to have the same relationship to him. Now, if you understand this, if you see this in beginning measure, then you will recognize why it's impossible for his church, and I speak of the church, to pray with authority, because it's not their authority over Christ, but it's his authority manifest through them because they are individually and corporately the vehicles for the revelation of his resurrection life and person in power.

And if you can see this and understand this and recognize this, then you will realize that praying with authority is, as I say, not our authority over the Lord, but his authority manifest in and through those individual members whom he has joined one to another in a fellowship of responsibility that there can be a revelation there of how wonderful he is as he takes the weak things of the world, the things that are not, to confound the things that are mighty and the things that are. Well, I hope this encourages you. I hope you're going to be done once and for all for the idea, well, I'm just a Christian or I'm just this or I'm just that.

My friend, God intended that the Father be glorified through you and the Son be glorified through you and the Holy Spirit be glorified through you, that this is the end of your being, the purpose for your being, and God has made every provision for it to be done in your life and in my life. Well, that's as far as we've gotten. That's the introduction.

I was hoping it would take about five minutes on this and then we would go to the theme of the day. But you'll just have to be here at 11 o'clock next Sunday morning and we'll go on with the prayer of authority. Now let's go to the Lord and thank him for what he's done for us in the Lord Jesus.

Shall we stand together in prayer? Father, somehow allow the Spirit of God to come upon this company of people and where there's then blindness that scales upon our eyes, thinking that thou wouldst give to us some little bit of energy, some little bit of ability that we would go out and carefully guard and use very judiciously for thee because there's so little of what thou hast given. Oh God, Father of our Lord Jesus, save us from dependence upon natural gift and natural talent and natural ability and natural enthusiasm and resources. Father, some have much but it isn't enough and others have little and they know it's not enough.

But oh God, bring all of us to the place where we realize that it's not of man or by man. For the things we have gained to us we must count lost to Christ. Bring us, we ask thee, by the power of thy Holy Spirit to that place where each of us recognize that in thy great love thou didst condescend and choose that we should be vehicles for the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ.

And when we discover how little he is, then Lord it gives the means to reveal how little we are shows how wonderful he is. Lord, bring us to that place where we see that in us, in our flesh, in ourselves, there's no good thing but all that we may realize that thou knowing this loved us nonetheless and in thy great grace it intends that we might know what is the greatness of thy power to us for to believe. Even the resurrection power of thy dear son manifests in and through us in all the responsibilities and tasks of our lives.

Bring us, Lord, as a people to that place where these truths are fulfilled even as this purpose is embraced and cherished by the glorifying things. So seal the word to our heart. Bless thy people, Lord, that so much to which we could have spoken needs that could have been brought before thee.

But we ask that somehow there will be that gracious ministry of the Spirit of God to each according to his need. Now may thy grace and mercy and peace from thyself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be and abide upon each of us now until we gather again. Amen.

Will you turn please to Ephesians chapter 1? We shall continue in the second part of the message begun last Lord's Day morning as it relates to this important subject, the prayer of authority. The morning was spent in what was intended to be a preface but proved to be establishing again the very foundation of our relationship to the Lord and the place from which all effective praying must proceed. Be it understood by you, therefore, that your ministry, and that is what we saw in Ephesians 4, the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry is essentially a ministry of prayer.

During the months past we've talked about several aspects of prayer, weeks past rather. We've talked about the forms of prayer, the kinds of prayer that are to characterize the instructed Christian. The foundation for the ministry was the fact that it's so frequently that we learn that prayer is valuable, prayer is essential, that God honors and blesses prayer, but when it comes to the manner of praying and the aspects of prayer, too little is said.

In a search for material on this subject I found virtually none available and so I'm grateful that the material that we've been preparing and presenting to you is going to be, we do believe, to the good offices of Mr. Schrader and the Christian publications made available in either booklet or in book form in order that it might be of greater value to us here in the tabernacle and to others that may wish to use it. Your ministry is a ministry of prayer. Unless you have learned and we have learned, I certainly want to assure you that I do not speak as one who has mastered prayer but one that is definitely a student in prayer.

The ministry of Mr. Gaslyne with us in February was so wonderfully used of God in all our hearts who shared in it, but in mine I do not know how it could have been of greater blessing to any than it's been to me in forcing me to study again all that the word had to say about the matter of prayer. There's been a complete revolution in my own prayer life and I feel as though one that had graduated from school and yet had to go back and start almost in kindergarten again crying out, Lord, teach us to pray. And I suppose that as long as we live in the flesh this will be our experience, learning and yet going back and seeing that in this wealth, this mine of truth that we're learning over and over again the lessons we thought we knew so well.

We saw just as the man who was healed but said, I see men as trees walking, only to have a second touch from the Lord and then to seek clearly. And perhaps this is what will characterize our pilgrimage as long as we are here in this world. But together we study at the feet of the Lord Jesus to learn how to pray.

Not only to pray but how to pray. Now, we are talking today about the prayer of authority. All the other aspects of prayer must be in your mind as you approach this.

If they're not, then you're going to begin. So let me just review by merely stating what we've considered. First, we begin in the Christian pilgrimage by prayer.

This is the prayer of a sinner that savingly relates him to Christ. Prayer in which he acknowledges his guilt. A prayer in which he confesses the justice of God's wrath.

In which he accepts the condemnation that God has pronounced upon him. In which he realizes that he deserves all that God has sentenced him to because of his sin. But the same time that he acknowledges his guilt, he recognizes the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for him.

And he, in prayer, savingly receives the Son of God. Passing thereby from death to life. Oh, the wonder that we're brought into this Christian way through prayer.

And dear friend, if you are here today not knowing the Lord Jesus, not having been born of God, then let me assure you that you begin in this way by prayer. Just as we've outlined. God be merciful to me, a sinner, takes the publican out of the list of the condemned, sends him home to his house justified.

For he's seen himself to be all that God said he was, but he's seen the Lord Jesus to be all that God said he is. And he's received Christ. May this be your experience if it hasn't been until this good moment.

Then we would think of the prayer of affirmation. Born of God, passing from death to life, we affirm daily, whenever we come to him in prayer, that such sinners were we. Guilty were we.

Deserving not but his wrath were we. And we affirm again all that's pertinent concerning ourselves. And then we affirm again all that's pertinent concerning Christ.

Reminding our hearts that we stand on the grounds of grace, faith in the finished work of Christ. A prayer of affirmation. Oh, let your heart linger long here.

Let this be the place where the walls are built and the gates are fixed and the hinged are hinged again. As you come to the Lord affirming, you're not teaching God, but you're affirming to your own heart. And he delights to hear the affirmation.

Affirming that once you were the slave of Satan, but now you have by your own choice put the ear of your heart to the door of his grace and had him bore it through. You thus bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. I love you, Lord, with all my heart.

Affirm it. Affirm it. For this he delights to hear.

And it establishes again your own confidence and releases the Spirit of God to quicken to you the very foundation of your relationship to the Lord in prayer. The prayer of confession. Oh, how important it is that we should walk with broken hearts.

Broken because we've seen ourselves. How easy it is for one that's been forgiven to think that he is in himself what he's become by God's forgiving grace. Without spot before the Lord, justified, just as if I'd never sinned.

It's so easy for one to feel then that he hadn't because he realizes he's justified. But how essential it is for us to realize that we're always going to be what we were as far as we in our essence are concerned. Paul saw it, in me and my flesh there's no good thing.

And thus, you need not be victimized by your traits and tendency and nature and disposition. There is victory in Christ, but the guilt becomes yours and mine when we fail to receive that victory and appropriate that victory. Someone said we use the life that you speak of, this life of victory, seems so easy.

You get flabby in the midst of it. You just don't do anything and he does everything. Or put it like this.

It would be impossible for you by rubbing your hands together to get a glow sufficiently warm to light the room. You can't light it in the sense of producing the illumination. But there's a switch there.

And if you put the switch on, the light will flow, the source of the energy elsewhere. The great battle in the Christian life is not when you understand the word, how can I have victory? In yourself you can, but in Christ there is victory. The place that muscle is required and sinew is demanded and bone must be used is in that moment when there's temptation and test.

And you know there's victory. If you'll reckon yourself crucified with Christ, there'll be the release of life. But where the battle comes is, will I put my hand on the switch because I'm enjoying the darkness? This is where the battle comes.

This is where the problem is. It isn't a question, can you get the victory in yourself? The word said no, but the victory's in Christ. The question is, are you going to reach out and flip the switch? And the switch is reckoning yourself to be dead.

Oh, here's where the test comes. You can't do it, but you have a choice as to whether or not you're going to allow him to do it. When you fail, it's because you refuse to allow him to do it.

You've got to accept the responsibility for it. Because he made himself available to you in that moment of test. And so that means brokenness.

Lord, there was victory in you. I didn't need to have said that. I didn't need to have done that.

I didn't need to have thought that or read that. I didn't need to. There was victory.

So there has to be brokenness. And this prayer of brokenness ought to be at the point of grief to the Lord. The moment you grieve the Spirit is the moment to deal with it.

If you don't deal with it then, you'll have to deal with it later. But you see, the longer you wait, the deeper the infection becomes, and the more, the deeper the surgery required. And so the brokenness, the prayer of brokenness ought to occur at the need, the moment of need.

Not to be postponed till the fall meeting. Not to be set off till there's a special season for revival. But if you've once known fellowship with God, then you realize that if you allow unconfessed sins in your heart, fellowship is broken.

The place of dealing is the moment of occurrence. And thus, the breach can be healed and you can go on in fellowship. Grieve not the Spirit of God is the first commandment.

We do when we fail to appropriate his grace. But, oh, we add insult to injury when we fail to break before the Lord in confession, in dealing with our own heart, judging it and forsaking it and confessing it. You say, well, if I do that, I'm just always going to be asking forgiveness.

Well, you'd better do it, dear heart, you'd better. Because if you don't, then you're just going to have the isolation and the estrangement that comes from having grieved the Spirit. And then, of course, there's the prayer of thanksgiving.

Oh, how essential it is that you should see that in everything we're to give thanks. Then there's the prayer of praise. To learn the difference between thanksgiving and praise is to release your heart in worship.

Thanksgiving is self-centered. You're grateful to the Lord for what he's done for you. And praise is God-centered.

You're overwhelmed and filled with awe and wonder at what God is, irrespective of what he does for you. There's the prayer of petition, wherein you don't pray for something and try to overcome God's reluctance, but you pray about something until you know his will, and then you pray in accord with his will, and you have that for which you pray. But prayer is not just sort of reading off a shopping list to the Lord.

He knows that you have need of these things. Praying about your needs, praying in the prayer of petition, is to pray relating to the matter until you know what his desire and will is in respect to it. And then to pray the prayer of faith, sort of register, take the claim check, and go expecting fully the answers to come.

The prayer of intercession. Oh, how essential it is that you should understand that there's a difference between the prayer of petition and the prayer of intercession. To intercede is to go into the presence of God in behalf of another, and to do in God's presence what that other ought to do and is unwilling at the time to do, to legally represent another in the presence of God.

This is intercession. This is what it means to intercede. Now, closely related to the prayer of intercession is the prayer of authority, that which is to engage us for the time remaining this morning.

The prayer of authority. Just the illustration that may be of help to you, is one that I've used in the past here and elsewhere, but I still think it brings the truth into focus and so make bold to use it again. The President of the United States, whether he be the incumbent or his predecessor, or the one who was there before him, Harry Truman, to whom this illustration refers, because it occurred particularly at that time, has

a ministry or a service or a work or an office that has two foundations for its performance.

The first is his ability, his competence. Were he to become mentally incompetent or physically incompetent, the Constitution has made provisions for a successor. And we recognize that competence is essential for the fulfillment of the office of president.

But there's not only ability, but it's also responsibility. It's not only what he possesses in himself, but it's the privilege and the obligations and the rights of the office. I refer to the time when President Eisenhower was about to be inaugurated as president.

The Constitution declared that at a given hour and a given day, the term of office for the incumbent ceased. And as of that hour, the one elected previously was president, even though it would be some little time until he would officially take office in inauguration. It was late at night.

President Truman had a group of his friends, close friends, to sit out those last hours that he would occupy the highest office in the land. And we are told by those who wrote of it just at the time that aides came from the White House bringing several papers to him. It was late at night.

It was nearing the midnight hour, the last hour. He took the pen that was presented to him and he affixed his signature to these several papers. And the very next day, the doors of federal prisons opened and the individuals whose names and description had been in the papers that had been signed the night before were let free.

They had received presidential pardon. Now, he had been, he hadn't run for president in November, hadn't been on the ballot. He wasn't expecting to serve any longer.

There was going to be a transfer of government. But he knew his prerogative. He knew his rights.

He knew that as president of the United States, he had the right to commute sentence and to give presidential pardon to those that were in federal prison. And he felt that in the case of the individual to whom he granted this, that it was justified and right and proper. And so he had used the rights and prerogatives that were his up until just a few moments before the time when his term was completed.

Had he had been ignorant, saying, well, another man was elected in November and after all, I don't really know whether or not I should and people don't want me any longer and I'm not going to be president after this day. I don't think I should do that. Had there been an uncertain timidity on his part, it could be that these men who went free on the morning would have stayed the full extent of their term.

He, on the other hand, realized his rights and realized his authority and realized his privilege, and so he used it. I believe that there's been an effort made on the part of the God of this world against whom we read in Ephesians 6 that we're wrestling to keep the Church of Jesus Christ in ignorance of the kinds of prayer and the place of prayer and the importance of prayer and the ministry of prayer. If everything that's done by God has done an answer to prayer, then you can well believe that the God of this world, who's the continuous enemy of Jesus Christ, is going to do everything he can to keep us in ignorance of prayer and keep us from praying.

But I believe if there's any one area of prayer that has been obscure more successfully than any other, it's that that's before us now, the prayer of authority. And when it ever has come to light, there's been such a tremendous pressure on the part of those that have seized upon the truth to press it beyond the bounds of

Scripture and exaggerate its importance that almost the error on the second part has been as bad as the error on the first part. There's two things that you can always expect the enemy of your soul to do in respect to truth.

The first is to keep you ignorant of it, and when you discover it, to make you become so enamored with it and enthusiastic about it that you lose the sense of proportion and it becomes overbalanced and exaggerated in the place that it normally has in Scripture. These are two strategies that are employed generally. We ought to be aware of the devices of the enemy and thus not be vulnerable at this point.

This prayer of authority is on the basis of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ took us with him in everything he did. Every Christian saw that at the cross Jesus Christ died for him. I was speaking last night with my dear friend Tom Watson from Florida years ago when I was in deputation ministry responsible for a conference down at Takoa, Georgia.

Tom came as one of the speakers and with him came his father who was the attorney general of the state of Florida for many, many years. Mr. Watson was a man. He was a man that had been one of the pioneers in Florida, respected by the state.

He was an elder in a church, Sunday school teacher. He had everything but Christ, everything but Christ. And oh, how he prayed, how he yearned and longed for it.

Tom Watson Sr. to receive the Lord Jesus. Years went on and I talked with friends. I was talking last night, yesterday with Tom.

I said, tell me about it, Tom. Well, he said, my father was running for the governor of the state of Florida and I think he would have made it even though he was running on the Republican ticket in the Democrat state because the state knew him and loved him, respected him. Then he had a stroke.

And I happened to be home from Korea, went into the hospital. My father told me that he'd had a vision. He'd seen a vision.

He said, I was in my right mind. I was sane. I saw a vision.

I saw that there were only two places. There was one place where Jesus Christ wasn't regarded. One place where he was ignored.

One place where he was spurned, where everybody was indifferent to him. And then there was another place where he was the center of everything. He was just the center of everyone's song.

He was the center of everyone's gaze. He was the center of everyone's desire. And I knew I didn't want to go to the first place.

And I knew I didn't belong in the other place. And I tried to look for a place in between there wasn't any. He said, I want you to tell me about how I can go to that place where Jesus Christ is the center of everything.

And so Tom and his wife talked to him, opened to him the way and the word. He seemed to see it. He said, now let me think, let me think.

They went away and they came back the next day. He said, you know, I saw it. I saw it.

I saw it. He said, what did you see, Father? He said, I saw that Jesus Christ not only died for sinners, not only died for the world, but he died for me. That's the important thing, he died for me.

And I know that he saved me. I know now that I want him. I don't know whether I'll ever get up from this bed or ever be well again, but I want to go where Jesus Christ is the center of everything.

And I only regret I haven't lived my life that way, making him the center of everything. Now that's what everyone sees that's a Christian, that Jesus Christ took them to the cross and he died for you. This is what takes us out of death into life, is the discovery that he died for you.

This is it. This is how you pass from death to life when you realize this, and you want him to be the center of everything, and you receive him as Lord and Savior. But you see, it's not only that he took you there to keep you out of hell and to take you to the place where he's the center of everything, but he took you with him all the way.

He not only went to the cross for you, but he went to the cross as you. And so when Christ died, you died. Now you know that.

Two people were on the cross, Christ and you, and you were crucified with Christ, so that you could have victory over yourself, and the traits and memories and disposition and habits and attitudes of the past. He died not only to save you from hell, but to save you from yourself. And so he took you with him to the cross.

He took you with him to the tomb. When he went to the tomb, he took you with him. You were buried with him, so that you'd have victory over the world.

And the world wouldn't have any greater hold on you than it has on a corpse. As you've been buried with him, and thus the world would have lost its grip and lost its hold. And he not only took you with him to the cross and took you with him to the tomb, but he was, when he was quickened, you were quickened with him.

He took you with him back again into life, and the life that made you a Christian was that life that began the day that Jesus Christ was quickened. He not only took you with him back into the resurrection life, but when he sat down at the right hand of the throne on high, he took you with him. That's what you've got to see, that this is where you reside.

This is where you live, and everything that he did, you did with him, because he took you with him. It's not something you're putting in, but it's something that he intended and he put in. So the natural habitat of a Christian is not under the circumstances, but seated in the heavenly.

And this is where the failure lies. So many Christians view themselves, see themselves, rather than the one they represent. The other day I was here Wednesday, and there was a lot of traffic, a great deal of traffic out here Wednesday afternoon with all the activity in the area.

And there was a young man directing traffic. He was a recruit. He didn't have a blue uniform on, he had the gray.

Obviously he was learning, and they put him in a good spot to learn. He had to learn real quick or else out there on 44th Street and 8th Avenue. But imagine that young man saying something like this.

Well, I'm not even a full-fledged policeman yet, and I didn't even make very good marks when I graduated from high school. My family doesn't have any standing in the community, and a lot of these people driving cars are important political figures, and they're business people, and they're wealthy people, and they're educated people. And here I am, a boy that just finished high school by the skin of his teeth, just graduated, just been made, taken in, and haven't done too well in anything.

And here I am telling these people to stop and to go. I shouldn't do that. What right do I have? Can you see the boy out there timidly put the whistle to his lips and look at these big trucks and go, and somebody looking at him, and he jumps, and somebody else comes the other way and he jumps, and he goes over and puts his hand down by the police box and starts to cry.

He says, I just can't. He takes the phone down and he calls the police chief or the sergeant, whoever it is, and says, I can't do it. It's too much for me.

Wouldn't that be pathetic? Wouldn't that be pathetic if that happened? But I can hear the sergeant say, now listen, they don't care about your high school diploma, whether it was cum laude or just laude. They don't care. It doesn't make any difference.

They're not interested in your family. They don't care whether your television set's paid for or not. They're not interested in whether or not you're... No, they don't care.

They're only interested in the fact that down here there's a government, and behind the city government's a state government, and behind the state government's a federal government, and you're the representative of the President of the United States and the federal government by the train of succession. And they don't care anything about you. They're just concerned about that uniform you're wearing and that position you occupy.

Now, you go out in the middle of the street and you stand there as though you were the commander-in-chief of the United States Army and put that whistle between your teeth and raise your hands and blow it and watch what happens. He does just that. And he runs back and takes the phone down and he said, they're stopped.

They're stopped on 44th Street. They're stopped on 8th Avenue. They're stopped for six blocks away.

Everybody stopped when I blew the whistle. And then he goes back and said, well, now remember the important thing isn't just get it to stop. It's to get it to move the way it ought to go.

And this is what God wants you to understand, that he took you with the Lord Jesus to the right hand of the throne and you're seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. And there's an area of prayer, an area of prayer that is related to this prayer of authority, where in a sense you are addressing your Lord concerning the traffic that has its origin in hell and is seeking to destroy everything that God would do and run over all of his plan and all of his purpose. And when you understand the prayer of authority, then you realize that you're not praying from under the circumstances, but you're there sharing with the Lord Jesus in enforcing his victory.

He accomplished his victory. He has achieved his victory. And he's turned over to his body, the Church, the right to enforce that victory.

Now there's a little booklet that I've recommended, and it's the only booklet on the subject that I do recommend for your general reading. There are one or two that are encyclopedic in intent. But the only booklet of this kind that I recommend is the one, *The Authority of the Believer*, written by J. A. MacMillan.

If I had the privilege of revision, and I don't, and can't seek it, I would like to change it to read *The Authority of the Body*. For it isn't a believer in his aloneness that's exercising authority. It is the believer in his relationship to Christ, and his believer in relationship to other members of the community of believers, and other members of the Church, that are entrusted by the Lord.

You see, it isn't just this policeman out here alone. He's part of a platoon, and he has over him a corporal, and a sergeant, and a lieutenant, and the whole chain of authority. And he's not out there on his own as a little entrepreneur setting up some place that he's going to make traffic stop.

He's there by appointment. And so it is that it's the authority of the body. There are some prayers that are only answered when they're prayed in concert.

They're prayed in fellowship with the body of Christ. There are some prayers that you ought not to pray until there are others of the same body to which God has joined you that share in the praying. So frequently it is that there are situations that arise in homes and in lives which give clear evidence that it is not just the dispositions of the people involved, but it is the nefarious work of the God of this world and the minions that serve him, the princes of darkness and the wicked spirits in high places.

You that have lived this, your life in the relative protection of America, cannot understand what those of us that have been responsible and privileged to be missionaries do in regard to the direct activities of satanic forces. But when you've lived with people that had prayed to demons by name and Satan by name and sacrificed deliberately to the God of this world, then you recognize that there is far more traffic in human affairs than is generally viewed by people that have lived in the comparative comfort and protection of a cultured Christian country. But I want you to know that whereas the traffic here is painted with invisible paint, so to speak, and the cars don't rumble and the horns don't honk as much as they do in the heart of some of the mission fields, nevertheless don't for so much as a moment suspicion that you are free from the activities of the God of this world.

And a church that is to know the blessing of God and to have the protection that he affords and the victory that he's provided wrought out in its midst must be sustained and supported by a company of believers, namely and particularly it ought to be the elder and the deacon and the Sunday school teacher and all who have responsibility ought to be at this point instructive and ought to seek instruction and ought to accept instruction and then ought to act in the concord and agreement that that instruction illustrates and establishes. The prayer of authority is the prayer of a body of believers, not just individuals going off in their own enterprise, but believers together in fellowship that see and understand the nature of their relationship to Christ and the privileges of that relationship, the rights that are afforded by that relationship, and are prepared to exercise the responsibilities and privileges that are entrusted to the body by the head of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now all of the kinds of prayer we've talked about are imperative.

We must understand and use them all. But if any is important, this is important, and it is absolutely essential that the spiritual leadership of a church learn this. Now I have pressed this little booklet again and again and again, and I've had the joy of having some coming to me saying, you know, I'm beginning to see, I've read that little booklet over and over again, and I'm beginning to see what he's talking about.

I'm beginning to see. Now I believe there are two ways for the work of God to be done. The one is to be done by human promotion and human enterprise, human enthusiasm and human activity.

And this gives a fair show of success. The only thing is, when tested by fire, it will found to be largely wood, hay, and stubble. Another way is that the work be done in accord with the principles of the word of God, slower it may seem.

But when these principles are understood, when these principles are embraced, when these principles are employed, the Spirit of God is released to do something that has eternal value and a structure that's going to stand the test of the fire. Now every Christian ought to understand the prayer of authority. All I can do today is just to really introduce you to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, is given to his body, the church, the responsibility to a kind of prayer, a phase of prayer, an aspect of prayer, the effect of which is to insulate his work from the depredation of the host of hell and to release the Spirit of God to work in behalf of the individual sinner, the home, the church, and the community.

Tremendously important. My time is gone. I wish that you'd get the booklet, read it, meditate upon it, perhaps someday in the future we can begin to see in closer concord and agreement exactly what the Spirit of God intends all these kinds of prayer, and particularly this aspect of prayer, to mean to us.

Now remember I say it again because it'll be a continuation of the message, the authority of the believer, J. A. MacMillan, a little 35-cent booklet, read carefully and thoughtfully and prayerfully, and with this one addition that it is the prayer of the authority of the body and not the individual, the believer, establishing you in a clear understanding of this essential truth and kind of prayer. Brethren, pray. Or any of these prayer phases or aspects you've seen, pray.

Lord, teach us to pray. Let us stand together. Our Father, we believe that it is in thy will and intent and purpose that thou shouldst get here in the heart of this dark, dismal, dying city, a people that are prepared to meet thee on thy terms and minister on the principles that are eternally fixed in the heavens.

And we thank thee for every man and woman and young person thou hast sent into this hall this morning, everyone that's heard. We trust that there shall be confirmation given by the Spirit of God to hearts, saying, this is truly God's word to us today. Might there be meditation upon that which we've heard, might there be further study until, Lord, that which has seemed to be difficult becomes by the teaching of the Holy Spirit to us as a company and as individual, clear that we become no longer children tossed to and fro, but men strong to stand in all the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ where he's placed us.

So to that end, seal the word to our hearts, direct us into meditation and study, patient waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ. May thy grace and mercy and peace, blessing from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be and abide upon each of us until we meet again. Amen.

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