

Listening and Praying for People who are willing to Change - 5

Session 5 - Praying in the Spirit, praying with the spirit

1 - Overview of the Course Structure

Listening:

- 1 – Persons in relation to God and to one another.
- 2 – Living the Union with Christ by the Spirit
- 3 – Presupposed matters for citizens and Christians in Australia
- 4 – Listening to one another: listening for one another.

Praying:

- 5 – Access to God through Christ in the Spirit
- 6 – Secret prayer, requested prayer and corporate prayer
- 7 – Presupposed matters for Christians in Australia about prayer
- 8 – Praying according to the will of God – led by the Spirit

Doing it:

- 9 – Praying with faith
- 10 – Working together.

So far:

Session 1 explored the basic relations on which we conduct the life God has given us. We saw that knowing God, on the basis that He has begun the conversation with the Jewish people, and then through Christ to us, means that we are relational in all our exchanges with Him and with one another.

We explored how this was reciprocal, and that it was based upon a wonderful act of grace which drew us into the love of God. We investigated how Christ has done all this work for us, and that we needed to see how it led to a gracious exchange with the Holy Spirit now, as we are in union with Him in our spirit.

In Session 2 we introduced the rather obvious principle that when people have done things in the past, they have, of course, decided to act. So we saw that we may presume they have decided to do so. We outlined the importance of following people's decisions.

Further, we saw that the gift of repentance was decisive for shifting and establishing a freedom to take place from past actions, habits and commitments.

Session 3 showed us that people do not arrive into our presence and relationship as neutral. Folks arrive committed to certain ideas, both from their education, their Christian culture that which surrounds them. We ignore these at our peril. Where people are not clear in their knowledge of relationship with God causes most of their problems. This raised the importance of teaching people right there, as you talk with them, the truth about matters upon which they are confused as they are committed. These current corruptions in the teaching of the church block the reception of grace, because they force us into a contractual, rather than a covenantal understanding and they make people insecure and works-driven.

We also gave an example of how to pray with someone in such away as to: [1] keep them free in their decision making from ourselves as they go. [2] to follow their decision making path to the issues that confront them today. [3] to make certain that they have a freedom to pray, which is not always the same as the freedom to talk about a matter.

Session 4 we opened ourselves to an important matter of the holiness of God. We looked at how that holiness manifests itself in His life and accordingly, how it comes over into ours. We explore what it means when people are ignorant that God is holy. We investigate how being holy implies that we listen exclusively to God.

Session 5 we begin to look at the central weakness of our praying as it is associated with the last days in which we live and the fact that we live, as redeemed persons in an as yet, bodily unredeemed state. We must learn that we are in the Spirit, and pray by faith from that position. must learn to pray by faith in the Spirit.

We must also learn what it is to pray with our spirit as opposed to praying with our mind in the corporate situation.

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1 - Praying in the Spirit

Also, in the same way the Spirit **helps** our weakness.

‘In the same way’ refers us back to the way the weakness of the flesh – laid out for us in Romans 7.14-25 – which was our state and yet, through the wonderful ‘law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus’, we experience a deliverance from this inherent weakness which was given to us through trusting the power of the Spirit to work in us a godly life despite our weakness.

συναντιλαμβάνεται – this verb, συναντιλαμβάνομαι followed by the dative, only occurs in the NT at Luke 10.40, [where Martha asks the Lord that Mary might help her,] and in Romans 8.26 means ‘to take hold with at the side’ for assistance [LXX Ge 30.8; Ex 18.22, Nu 11.17] and so means ‘to take a share in, to help in bearing’, so generally ‘to help’.

While the first compounding preposition here, σύν, carries the idea of “with”; the second compound, ἀντί, has the idea of ‘in the place of’. So the combination suggests a picture of the Spirit alongside, or with us, bearing in our place the burden that this ‘weakness’ means for us. It is a ‘helping’ which is given us by the coming alongside of us to assist with this inability that we have.

For, we **don’t know** what we must necessarily pray for

The particular weakness, or inability, that we have is now identified for us by the following clause introduced by γάρ. It is the fact that we are ignorant of what we must necessarily pray. There are things to pray ‘just as we must’ and we don’t know what they are. This tells us that prayer is not only necessary in the Christian life in Spirit, but that this necessary matter is encumbered by a powerful ignorance which is considered a weakness.

It reflects a state of affairs similar to the matter of the weakness of the flesh expounded in Romans 7 and 8. What we must find, as we are presented with there, is the moment-by-moment experience of a victory over the weakness. While our state does not change in the tension where we must live – it is that of living in the flesh but not according to it; so we might say about this present weakness, we must live in the ignorance of knowing what to pray, but not according to that weakness. And the remedy is the same; we must trust the Spirit for the empowerment to pray what we must.

But, the same Spirit petitions for us by groanings unutterable [unspoken groanings].

This same Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8.13, empowered us in our inability to put to death the deeds of the body – now takes a share in the bearing of this other weakness that we have, the weakness in praying, so as to help us. The help He brings is that He comes alongside to bear the weakness, the ignorance of knowing what to pray about [the content].

The word used ἐντυγχάνω means ‘to petition’, or ‘to make petition for’. It is the picture of an advocate, a paraclete – someone called to the side of a person who must make a case and needs someone to help them make it, to phrase it in the appropriate way.

The help of the Spirit is to make the petition for us, and the instrument He uses here are ‘groanings that are unwordable [unspeakable, cannot be spoken]’. “A groaning” translates στεναγμός. It is a groaning noise that registers a feeling that is internal and unexpressed in words. It is a groaning which is appropriate for us, who are not finished, but He comes into us to live His Life in us as we live in the tension of our position.

We have already met this word in Romans 8.18-25, as a way that the creation, which was subjected to internal frustration – not by its own choice – now groans as it waits for the maturity and ‘finishing off’ of the redeemed humans. We ourselves are also groaners, because we now live, with the firstfruits of the Spirit’s work happening in our lives, nevertheless we know ourselves not to be finished yet.

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So there is a groaning going on in creation as it waits for us and we inwardly groan as redeemed persons who are engaged in waiting for our full sonship, which is the redemption of our bodies. So we are experiencing the “now” of God’s kingdom with the parallel “not yet” also in our experience. This living ‘in between the times’ of the Lord’s ascension and his parousia is the reason for the weakness we have. As to our state we cannot pray because we are not finished. As to our experience, in the Spirit we can pray because He will help us. It is for us, as in all things, a matter of faith.

Now, into this weakness, inherent to our present state in the time of waiting, the Holy Spirit is within us, united to our spirit and He helps us to pray what we ought; He petitions for us, groaning along with us.

The One who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is

The direction of our praying is not to the Spirit but to the Father or the Son. Here we see that God is the one who searches the hearts of men and women. This assures us that if our praying is difficult for us because of our weakness, then our heart is known and open to God. He sees what we have at the centre of our interest; he knows our best desires.

This means, amongst other things, that when we pray, even as we are helped by the Spirit, we are not praying to inform God what is on our heart. We can assume that He knows that. He looks into our being and has no need for our prayer to speak our heart to Him. That is not a matter upon which our weakness impinges – for the simple reason that the knowledge of our heart’s desires are already searched out and known to our Father.

Because the mind of the Spirit petitions on behalf of the saints according to God

‘according to God’

Nor do we need to worry that God who searches our hearts would have any difficulties in knowing what the mind of the Spirit is either. That is one matter we can be assured about for, as three Persons they are One.

It is out of the inner Life of the Trinity that the mind of the Spirit is already the mind of God; The Spirit’s mind is ‘according to God’. It is a function of the Life of God that there is Unity of mind and will. That is, the One who searches our hearts, knows what the mind of the Spirit is because it is His mind – one and the same. It is because the Spirit Himself is God, that we have a paraclete within us Who, shares in the unity of will and mind of God the holy Trinity. It is God addressing God that is happening within us.

‘on behalf of the saints’

The petitions of the Spirit are what we are trusting in as we make our prayers to God. Because the weakness we have is that while we ‘must pray’, we don’t know what to pray. This is another way of saying that we don’t know how to pray “according to the will of God”. Well, the Spirit does exactly that! And as we trust Him to groan with us, and as we open our mouth to speak to God, we will know the experience – still being in our state of weakness – of praying according to the will of God. We shall be praying ‘in the Spirit’ [Eph 6.18; Jude 20] and not in the flesh.

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2 - Praying with the Spirit 1 Corinthians 14

We read the chapter and see the meaning of the expression, and then look to how that works in practice.

Your **reading assignments** to consolidate this session is to make your own notes of this session. Master these distinctions which we have made - they will alert you as you listen to others.

2 - The Use of the hour we have together:

[a] To acquaint you with the main things

[b] To direct you to the reading outside of the sessions

[c] Reading is mainly found on the website **www.davidboan.net**.

Linked to this site is **www.thegraciousgod.net**. It carries larger files, particularly of audio material in mp3 and mp4.

[d] To be constantly interrupted by what you ask and want to talk about.