

**WHOSE PRAYER?***Scripture Reading: Luke 11:1-2*

All over the world, in churches, cathedrals, and other assembly halls, millions of professing Christians faithfully recite the so-called "Lord's Prayer" as a part of the order of service as they conduct their worship programs. In actuality, this is not the "Lord's Prayer" but a prayer which Jesus taught His disciples in response to their request.

One of His disciples said unto Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). This took place during Christ's earthly ministry, which dealt exclusively with the nation of Israel. Note the first request "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." Israel had been promised a kingdom which was to come down from heaven and was to be ruled by Christ their King. Obviously, this request is not an appropriate one to be made by the saints of this dispensation of grace. Today's believer has not been promised an earthly kingdom but heaven itself.

"For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). Why the contrast? Israel has been set aside and their kingdom promise has been postponed due to their disobedience. A new dispensation has been established and another apostle is its minister under the grace of God—not under law. Christ and the twelve apostles instructed the kingdom believers, but the saved of the dispensation of the grace of God receive their doctrine from the apostle Paul, according to the revelation of the mystery.

*REH**Notes:***SUFFICIENT GRACE***Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 12:9*

When the Apostle Paul pled with the Lord for relief from his affliction, the response was "My grace is sufficient for thee." We, who today are living in the dispensation of the grace of God, need to understand the all-sufficiency of God's grace. Its scope is limitless, but the dispensing of it is under the control of God alone. He determines when and in what degree we are recipients of His boundless grace.

God's grace is an unmerited, unearned and undeserved gift bestowed as the result of God's love and pity. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). Potentially, there is no limit to the extent of the grace that God can impart, for "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). Why then do we sometimes feel that God draws back from granting us release from our distresses when we plead with Him for resolution of our plight? Because He is God and by His determinate power "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

We are to give of ourselves in His service without reservation (Romans 12:1). We are to willingly suffer for Him (II Timothy 3:12). "But my God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). Indeed, God's grace is sufficient!

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## THE JOY OF SUFFERING

*Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 12:9-10*

There are many things impossible to be understood by unregenerate man. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14). One thing that cannot be conceived of by the human intellect is the fact that it is possible, in the face of pain and suffering, for one to experience joy. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, "[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

When the apostle pled with the Lord to have the thorn in his flesh removed and was refused, he reacted saying, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (II Corinthians 12:9-10). When preparing to appear before the courts of Jerusalem, Paul wrote of the afflictions to be brought upon him and declared, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Our apostle passes along his attitude in a statement which is all-inclusive: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). This advice can only be taken to mean that he exhorts us to be joyful under any and all circumstances: one example of spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9).

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## IN THE BELOVED

*Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:4-6*

"[God] hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated 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, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved [One]" (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Amazing grace! We, who by grace through faith are members of the Body of Christ, are blessed above those of all former dispensations. Accepted in the Beloved! There could be no closer relationship. "For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9-10).

Our position is acquired without our having earned it or deserved it. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). He asks nothing in return but our love, our thanks, our praise and our total dedication to serving and glorifying Him. This is little enough as compared with "His great love wherewith He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4).

"[He] gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4). "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15). How ironic it is that any recipients of this great sacrificial blessing should regard it lightly and thanklessly! To the saints at Corinth, Paul wrote, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?" (I Corinthians 3:3)

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**PATIENCE REWARDED**

*Scripture Reading: Romans 8:24-25*

"We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:24-25). The writer refers to the day that Christ will take His Body members to dwell eternally with Him. Paul describes the wonder of it: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

We, having been justified by faith, "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience; and experience hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Patience is a key to much of our spiritual character as saints of God. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

As ministers of Christ, we are exhorted to practice patience as we labor in His service. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (II Timothy 2:24). "Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient to all men" (I Thessalonians 5:14). The source of our capacity to practice accordingly is defined by Paul: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:22). "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). Without God-given patience, we could never endure while "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

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**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?**

*Scripture Reading: II Timothy 2:15*

JESUS SAID, "As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7).

PAUL SAID, "...The ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, To testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

JESUS SAID, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

PAUL SAID, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17).

JESUS SAID, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewith shall we be clothed?...For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Matthew 6:31-32).

PAUL SAID, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5:8).

JESUS SAID, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

PAUL SAID, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

JESUS SAID, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

PAUL SAID, "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26).

**What is the difference? See Romans 15:8 & 16.**

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## THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY

*Scripture Reading: John 2:21*

In the verses immediately preceding our text, Jesus had just purged the temple. As usual, the Jews wanted a sign. They wanted to know by whose authority He had done these things. Also in typical form, our Lord's answer went right over their heads. The Lord Jesus spoke of spiritual truths, but the Jews saw only the physical. Just as with the woman at the well who thought only of physical thirst, so these Jews were also blind to the great revealer of truth before them.

The temple of His body...Think of it! Colossians 2:9 says, "that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." By this time, the glory of God had long since departed from the temple. How the Jews longed for the glory to return! Yet here before their own eyes was the very "express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3) and the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), and they failed to recognize it!

How often we also lose sight of spiritual truths. We sometimes forget that ours is a spiritual, heavenly hope and calling. Yet how often we are Esaus, trading our spiritual blessings for a mess of earthly porridge! By God's grace may we not lose sight of our rich blessings which the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished and secured for us through the "temple of His body."

*David Havard*

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## MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY

*Scripture Reading: Romans 12:4-5*

There has always been a natural human tendency for people to exalt themselves over others. This is true even among believers. It often begins with an attitude of superiority, but it can quickly degenerate into cruel actions which convey the idea to others that they are unimportant.

To combat such a problem among the Roman believers, the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to pen the instructions found in Romans chapter twelve. First, *they must see themselves properly*. Especially among those of the Roman empire, there was a pattern of judging men according to their rank, wealth, or eloquence (just as many do today—adding "appearance" to the list). But one need "not think of himself more highly than he ought to think" if he recognizes all blessings being sovereignly given to him. Even spiritual gifts (or abilities) are given to us by God. There is no room then for inflated egos over these things.

Next, *they must see others properly*—and this is the key. God would have them understand that every believer is important. In the human body, there are many members of the body, but each one serves a vital role. The eyes are capable of seeing; but without feet to move and hands to grasp an object, the body can not function properly. Each member serves a vital role, is as important as the other, and effects the whole. So it is in the Body of Christ. Seeing ourselves as being individual members of one Body and dependant upon one another is God's cure for conceited thinking.

Has someone in your assembly been made to feel less important than others? Then share these truths with those who need them, and demonstrate your appreciation for those less esteemed by inviting them to your home for fellowship.

*John Fredericksen*

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