

Series: 2 Corinthians
Title: God's Purpose in Prayer
Text: 2 Corinthians 1: 11
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2 Corinthians 1: 8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; 11: Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The apostle Paul declared we should not trust in ourselves but we should trust God alone. Then he glorified God alone for delivering us in the past, present and future.

Yet, he also says the saints helped by their prayers. Do you find that strange? Does God use the prayer of his saints? What is the purpose of prayer? What is God doing through prayer?

Proposition: God uses the means of prayer to edify the one praying, as much as the one for whom we pray.

THE MEANS

2 Corinthians 1: 11: Ye also helping together by prayer for us,...

God uses the means of prayer.

Believer's pray for one another. We know that is true because God produces prayer. Faith is God's gift the same as repentance, righteousness, holiness, and all other fruit of the Spirit. But do we know that not even our prayer is produced by us? True prayer is produced in the child of God by our God.

Christ produces prayer in his redeemed. Christ is THE Intercessor of God's people. Before we had spiritual life within us, Christ made Intercession for us to God our Father. We saw in Psalm 27, that our faithful Redeemer perfectly believed and served God the Father—even in the darkness of separation from God on the cross—even bearing our judgment on the cross, Christ sought the face of the LORD in perfect faith in perfect prayer:

Psalm 27: 9: Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Now, having justified his people—he is risen—everliving to make intercession for us. This is his prayer to God for each one he redeemed at God's right hand.

Psalm 27: 9: Hide not thy face *far* from [him]; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been [his] help; leave [him] not, neither forsake him, O God [thou art the God] of his salvation.

His wounds plead this for his people. His perfect righteousness pleads this for his people. His presence with the Father pleads this for his people.

When we suffer light affliction or our brethren suffer, we often do not pray or cannot pray, much less pray in faith. But remember: "*the life we now live in the flesh*"—in the new man—"we live by the faith of Christ."

Christ comes in the power of his blood, in the Holy Spirit, into our hearts, saying, “Seek ye my face.” He speaks effectually. He makes us willing and able to pray. So we glorify him, saying

Psalm 27: 8: *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.*

He makes us truly pray, so we pray,

Psalm 27: 9: *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*

Not only does Christ intercede for us and help us pray to the Father, God the Holy Spirit helps us to pray due to our infirmities.

Romans 8: 26: *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

So seeing it is by our Redeemer and by the Spirit of God that we pray, we know for certain, that God’s saints pray for one another. Therefore, also, we acknowledge that the praise and glory for our praying goes, not to us, but to Christ our Head who effectually puts prayer in our hearts. Our praise goes to the Spirit who makes intercession for us. And we glorify God our Father who is working his sovereign purpose in it all.

Let me give a word of caution—I am speaking to you brethren right here. I hope others hear and heed this warning, but I am speaking to you. It is not good to be on social media writing, “I am praying for you.” Indeed, we ought to comfort our suffering brethren. We should tell them we are praying for them. If we really are! But it is easy to say. It is much more difficult to do. I wonder how often it never goes beyond writing it. But beware of announcing it before the world on social media. That comes too close to disobeying Christ’s command to his saints. He said,

Matthew 6: 5: *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

I am not discouraging you from praying for your brethren. I encourage it. Pray for one another. Pray for me. Pray for our suffering brethren. Let your brethren know you have prayed for them. But remember, God will not hear any prayer except what is produced by him, which is between you and God in private, for which God alone gets all the glory. So pray in private.

So God does use the means of prayer. Indeed God’s people to pray for one another because our great Intercessor sees to it.

THE FIRST PURPOSE: UNION

2 Cor 1: 11: Ye also helping together by prayer for us,...

The first purpose of prayer is that through prayer God unites his people together—“*Ye also helping together by prayer for us,...*”

Our Help—preeminently—is God alone. Paul just said, “*we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us].*” God our Father delivered us in divine election. The Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ delivered us by redeeming us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. God the Holy Spirit delivered us in regeneration by setting our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. God continues to deliver us past, present and future all the days of our lives. At last he shall deliver us into his glorious presence forever! We just saw it is even God who puts the prayer in our heart.

Now, God uses Paul to say, “*We are helping together by praying*” for our suffering brethren. God is so gracious to his frail sons and daughters. He does not need us. Yet, he uses us.

Still, the key word here is—“*together.*” God uses the suffering of our brethren and the means of prayer to bind his saints *together* at Christ’s feet! Our prayer is not us moving God. It is God moving us.

Picture prayer like this. Picture a flock of sheep in a pasture. They are all grazing—some here, some over there, some in the other direction. Then God sends the wolf—not letting it slay one of his sheep but just so the sheep sees he is helpless. Then all sheep flock close together at the feet of their shepherd, calling out, looking to him to save that one little suffering lamb. So the Shepherd takes up that little lamb on his shoulder and walks on as all his flock huddles together right behind him under the safety of his rod and his staff.

One of God’s purposes of prayer is that by allowing one of our brethren to suffer, he brings all his sheep together at the feet of Christ Jesus our great Shepherd. And that is what God always accomplishes by it.

THE SECOND PURPOSE: ACKNOWLEDGING

2 Corinthians 1: 11...that for the gift *bestowed upon us by the means of many persons...*

Another purpose of prayer is to keep us acknowledging that every gift we receive is from God alone by his free grace—“*for the gift bestowed upon us*”

“*The gift bestowed upon us*” is the deliverance God provides, which Paul just spoke about. After causing his saints to pray for one another, God bestows his gift of deliverance “*by the means of many persons.*”

God does not have to use means. But God has chosen to use means. He chose to use the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And God chose to use the means of prayer. But understand, from eternity, God already purposed and predestinated the gift that God will bestow on each of his children, including the time and circumstances. So the bestowal of his gift is no new thing with God. Notice in Ezekiel 36 that God declared the end from the beginning. Then God said he people would ask him to do what he already purposed to do from the beginning.

Ezekiel 36: 33: Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34: And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35: And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited. 36: Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined *places*, *and* plant that that was desolate: I the LORD

have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*. 37: Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Get this. God has chosen this means of the prayer of his saints, not for us to persuade God to do something new or what we will. God has chosen the means of prayer to bring us to ask God to bestow what God already purposed and promised.

The purpose is to keep his saints ever acknowledging that we depend upon God for every gift of his grace. By using the means of many brethren praying for us—he increases our love for one another. Faith in the Lord and love to brethren is the reason God uses this means of prayer. He makes us acknowledge through prayer that we depend upon him for every gift.

THE THIRD PURPOSE: GLORIFICATION

2 Corinthians 1: 11...that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The purpose of God in prayer also includes bringing all his people to glorify God—“*by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*”

After we have asked God for help and God has worked his will, do we thank God? After we have asked God’s mercies upon us, after we have received God’s mercies upon us, do we remember to thank God for the petitions he answered?

Though I hear and read a lot of people saying “they are praying for this or that person”, I rarely see someone write, ‘I prayed thanking God for hearing and doing what he purposed from eternity.’ Again, I am not suggesting they should announce it to the world. I am just using it as a point to ask, ‘Do we thank God for hearing and answering our petitions?’

God’s saints do! The same one who puts the prayer in our hearts, the same one who turns us to God alone, also puts thanksgiving in our hearts and makes us know we have no one to glory in but God!

When David suffered trials, he employed his own great powers of thought and action. He was well served by many human helpers. He himself prayed to God. Many brethren prayed to God for him. But David did not ascribe his deliverance to the one or the other, only to God.

All gifts and powers given us to help ourselves and all human helpers are themselves the gift of God. Also, when all those things are used, they are only effectual through God’s power alone. The greater the trouble, the more obvious the danger, the more miraculous our deliverance, the more clear the hand of God. So to God, we give all the glory.

But notice it is the thanks of many that goes up to God. It is not just me who suffered and was delivered who glorifies God for delivering me. But through the means of many praying, God causes many to cry out in thankfulness giving God all the glory.

The only thing I know to say is what an all Wise-God! God uses the means of prayer. So as he enables, pray without ceasing!

By prayer he brings his sheep together at the feet of Christ. So remember God’s purpose and remember it as you pray. Never make a show of prayer. Pray in secret.

By prayer he keeps us acknowledging all our help is God alone. So in all prayer acknowledge our need of him.

By prayer he keeps us crying in thankfulness giving him all the glory. In every means God uses, it is for his glory and our good. Therefore, brethren, in all things give thanks, praising and glorifying God.

What an all-wise God!

Amen!