



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## Kingdom Prayer, Part 3

Will Metzger's *Tell the Truth*

*"Do you like games?... the challenge?... the excitement?... the competition? How about the thrill of adventure? Do you like bungee jumping?... diving out of airplanes?... how about cliff diving? If you like the challenge which accompanies playing games or the adventure and risk of sky diving, then you're going to love Christianity! Come to Christ and you'll experience all the challenge and adventure you ever could want."*

So goes the various gospel presentations which were part of the '70s culture in America. In 1981, Will Metzger wrote a book exposing these man-centered approaches. His goal was to argue for a God-centered approach, one which reflected the truth of God's word that

- God created mankind for His glory.
- Mankind instead rebelled against God and so went their own way.
- As a result, mankind stands before God doomed.
- Yet God being rich in mercy became man, and so both upheld the law for His elect, and then died in their place on the cross.
- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

I read this book in the '80s and it radically altered the way I approached life. From that point on, I saw things pertaining to the church largely in terms of two categories: man-centered or God-centered.

There is man-centered worship and God-centered worship. There is man-centered counseling and God-centered counseling. There is man-centered preaching and God-centered preaching.

And that is why three weeks ago when I began studying the prayer before us, I immediately began questioning whether Paul was being man-centered here in his prayer or God-centered.

Recall the background that during Paul's Roman imprisonment the apostle had the privilege of leading a man by the name of Onesimus to the Lord. And in the ensuing discipleship, Paul discovered that Onesimus was a run-away slave. In fact Onesimus was not only a runaway slave, he had run-away from a *Christian* master. This meant that a far more serious issue was at hand than Onesimus' violation of Roman law; two brothers in Christ were at odds!

Just as a Roman governor endeavored to maintain the peace of Rome — the *Pax Romana* — so Paul considered that death was not too high a price to pay in order to keep the peace of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:6-7 (NASB), "But brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?"

Truly nothing is more important than the peace which Christ died to create.<sup>1</sup> And that is why Paul quickly sent Onesimus back to Philemon so that the two brothers might be reconciled.

You say, "*But under Roman law Onesimus could and most likely would be executed!*"

Indeed! But, is Onesimus' life more precious than Christ's life which was forfeited to establish NOT ONLY peace with God<sup>2</sup> BUT ALSO peace between members of the body of Christ?<sup>3</sup> Ought we to cherish our own life above Christ's?

So Paul sent Onesimus back to Colossae that he might be reconciled with Philemon. However, the apostle didn't send Onesimus empty handed. Rather, Paul penned this epistle in which he appealed to Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

### Prayer Prompted by People

Now in the course of this letter, Paul recorded a prayer which as we have seen is a model when it comes to praying on behalf of the Kingdom of God. As the Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of Christ in the hearts of men, notice that the prompting for kingdom prayer is people!

Philemon 1:4, "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers."

Truly, Kingdom Praying is focused not upon our personal

- Needs.

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<sup>1</sup> It might be objected, "What about the case of false doctrine or unrepentant sin? Ought we not to break the peace in addressing these situations?" It is imperative to realize that in these situations the peace *already* has been compromised. Accordingly our discipline or confrontation of heterodoxy is not a compromise of the peace of Christ, but an attempt to restore it!

<sup>2</sup> Compare Romans 5:1

<sup>3</sup> Compare Ephesians 2:11-22

- Wants.
- Desires.
- Good.

BUT upon God's reign and rule in the hearts of man. And that brought us to the catalyst when it comes to kingdom prayer; it arises when we behold the faith of the believer and how it results in an undying love for the body of Christ!

Philemon 1:5, "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints."

Tell me more about this love!

Philemon 1:7, "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother."

Truly when we behold kingdom fruit in the life of the child of God, we are moved to praise, adoration, and supplication! And that brought us to the content of kingdom praying.

#### Content of Kingdom Prayer

The content of kingdom praying is that we long for the Kingdom of God to come to this earth. This is a two-fold prayer.

- Philemon 1:7, "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother."

We pray that the child of God might come to know, realize, experience, and taste of the good things which God works out in the lives of His people- such as

- Love.
- Joy.
- Peace.
- Patience.
- Kindness.
- Goodness.
- Faithfulness.
- Gentleness.
- Self-control.

We pray that the child of God might extend these graces to others unto the building up of the body of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Now brothers and sisters, as wonderful as all of this sounds, isn't Paul being just a little man-centered?

#### The Focus of Kingdom Prayer

True, Christ taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). From this it would seem to follow

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<sup>4</sup> Compare Ephesians 4:14-16

that Kingdom Praying ought to revolve NOT around people BUT around God!

So how does Paul avoid not only the accusation, but more importantly the problem of being man-centered in this prayer life?

At the outset, Paul's focus is God and Paul's desire to "thank Him" for the work He was doing in Philemon's life.

Philemon 1:4, "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers."

From this we see that, yes, kingdom praying revolves around man. However as this text bears out, the adoration and praise is not given to man, but God who is at work in man.

### Kingdom Work is About God

How is that all kingdom work is brought about by God?<sup>5</sup>

Philippians 2:12-13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

This passage lays down a very important principle about the kingdom of God; God is the one who works out His kingdom in the lives of people. As such

- The good that we might will.
- The progress we might make as children of God.
- Those good things most noticed by man in us.

All of these are the direct result of the working of God in our lives. Paul again recognizes this when it come to God's work.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Truly when it comes to any Kingdom activity, God is close behind. Nothing which might be deemed as genuinely "good" in this life is outside of the direct working of God. In fact James makes this fact very clear.

James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Truly in and through all things, God is bringing about His good pleasure in and through us. There is no such thing as a free or random act of kindness. All good things are brought about by God.

Hebrews 13:2-21, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. also Col. 1:29 and Phil. 1:6.

great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

This fact is true even when it comes to our salvation.

John 1:12-13, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

There is no question that any and every Kingdom activity or benefit is a gift of God. All is inspired

- By God.
- For God.
- Through God.
- Unto God.

Thus to focus on the reign and rule of Christ in man at its base is to focus on GOD’S WILL being worked out in man. And so, while the kingdom of God revolves around Christ’s reign and rule in man — and therefore largely involves man — nevertheless we recognize that kingdom praying is not man-centered, but God-centered.

### God and His Greatness

In fact, our next point clearly illustrates this; all kingdom work testifies to God and His greatness. Paul in the book of Romans introduces himself to the Roman brethren in hopes of being helped on his way to Spain.<sup>6</sup> Because Paul did not plant this church and had never been in Rome, it therefore behooved him to detail what he had been teaching throughout Greece, Asia Minor, and Jerusalem. As such, Paul set about explaining the fundamentals of the faith which began here with the state of the irreligious before God. Paul begins by giving the basis why the non-believer (those in the deepest darkest jungles of Africa) are without excuse.

Romans 1:20, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

Truly as the author and builder of this world, God fashioned all things such that they point to Him, not only to His existence but also to His greatness. Think about this for a moment. To behold...

- A sunrise.
- The mountains.
- A crashing storm.
- The birth and growth of a child.
- The complexity of the body.

When one beholds these things, he is beholding the glory, honor, and power of almighty God. When one

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<sup>6</sup> Compare Romans 15:24

is moved by anything in creation such that you are filled with a sense of God's greatness and your minuteness is to be moved to worship.

### The Craftsman

Imagine a Greek/Roman temple with its large pillars holding up the structure. Each of the pillars has been carved into the image of noble men and women. As you approach the temple, you are taken back by how exquisite was the work of the mason. Details which, from afar could not be seen, upon a closer look, are revealed.

Clearly the master builder took great pride in his work. In fact, though the artisan has long been dead, the testimony of his greatness and skill still is seen. There is no doubt that when he lived, the mason who performed such a work would have protected his creation unto death. By works end, the temple would have been more important than his own life for it proclaimed his glory.

This is the teaching of Scripture as it relates to this world. God is the master builder to which all of creation points unto the praise of His glory.

Psalm 19:1-4, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun."

Everything in creation screams out, "Behold! God is awesome!" The Psalmist further declares this truth.

Psalm 8:1, 'O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens."

Psalm 50:6, "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself."

In fact, Isaiah says that creation not only was created by God, BUT serves as a sign to proclaim that fact.

Isaiah 55:12-13, "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Truly, God's Kingdom work testifies to the Lord's greatness! And yet it is not just in the context of our created world. Paul wrote Ephesians about the same time that he wrote Philemon. It was penned with a wider audience than just the brethren in Ephesus. Indeed, all the churches in Asia Minor were to read this epistle.

Now after establishing the truth that salvation is completely and totally the work of God, Paul gives the reasoning.

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship<sup>7</sup>, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

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<sup>7</sup> poihma poiema This is the same word used in Romans 1:20 for *made*.

The word for *workmanship* in this verse is from the Greek word from which we get the word *poem*. It was used of the statue which a master builder created or of the poem which the poet produced, both of whose existence testify to the greatness of the master.

From this we see that it is NOT just creation that proclaims God's glory. It also is from God's re-creation which the Lord intends to receive glory! When the Lord works in the life of man redemption and brings forth kingdom fruit He intends to receive glory.

God is, to use the words of Ephesians 2, writing a poem which He intends for us to read unto His glory. He is raising up a temple for the purpose of inspiring awe and reverence over the Master Builder.

Thus do you see how kingdom praying, though moved and prompted by man, is NOT man-centered?

Kingdom praying has as its focus the honor and glory of God. Kingdom praying is so that His work is beheld, marveled at, and enjoyed. In fact that is how we take the final words of Paul.

Philemon 1:6, "[And I pray] that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."

Literally this verse could read that "the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you unto Christ!" Everything Paul prayed for here as it related to Philemon was unto the praise and glory of Christ. In other words, Paul's marveling over Philemon's

- Faith which he had toward Christ.
- Love which he had toward the body of Christ in Colossae.

was NOT prompted by anything which Philemon had said, thought, or done. Rather, the joy and rejoicing which Paul experienced as he gazed at Philemon was a rejoicing in Christ on account of what Christ was doing!

This is the focus of kingdom prayer. It beholds the work of Christ in the hearts of man, and in response

- Celebrates it.
- Rejoices over it.
- Longs to see more of it.

This brothers and sisters is the heart-beat of kingdom praying.

In light of this, do you understand what this makes us as kingdom citizens?

- Trophies of His grace.
- Temples which proclaim His skill.
- Poems which reflect His wisdom, knowledge, love, and skill.

To use an expression found throughout the Psalms, "Pause and wonder!"<sup>8</sup> In the realm of the poet, think of how many poems are written which utilize these traits to produce a sense of awe on the part of the reader:

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<sup>8</sup> A possible translation of *selah*.

- Trial.
- Difficulty.
- Uncertainty.
- Victory.
- Exaltation.
- Irony.

Well, each providence in your life are the strophes in God's poem. From the heights of exaltation to the depths of despair, God is proclaiming a glorious message through you! In fact, Paul said as much:

2 Corinthians 3:2-3, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

You say, "But my life is a mess! I'm not much of a poem... painting... or pillar!"

You still don't get it, do you?

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."

If life were a poem — and it is — it is a working of God. From this verse we conclude that the theme of our life would be one of brokenness, sorrow, sickness, suffering, and tragedy. For by choosing the weak and worthless things of creation and using them greatly, God alone receives the glory. This is Paul's point.

2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

An *earthen vessel* was the clay jar in which someone relieved themselves in the middle of the night so that they wouldn't have to go outside and risk the dark. That is the canvas on which God has deigned to paint His masterpieces! Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate that salvation is all God because we are God's workmanship.

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We are God's masterpieces; His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10)! The coming of the Kingdom of God on this earth involves the artistry of the Master in the lives and hearts of man.

When one gazes upon the working of God's kingdom in man, to be



- Moved.
- Filled with joy.
- Fall on your knees in adoration and praise.

is not man-centered but, quite to the contrary, is God-centered as it exalts the glory of God!

So when it comes to kingdom praying; yes, by necessity at first we are going to gaze upon the canvas or the poem, but that gaze, in the life of the child of God, will always lead to reverence and awe over the Master. This is the focus of kingdom prayer!

## **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon and these notes can be found at [Kingdom Prayer, Part 3](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on April 20, 2008. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church