

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Praying for the Right Things, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Code: 53-6

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II has been the cargo cults, as they're called in the South Pacific. Many of the aboriginal island peoples ranging all the way from Australia to as far north as Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the allied armed forces during World War II. The American military, in particular, often used remote islands that had been inhabited only by local natives. They used those islands as temporary landing strips and supply depots. White men came to those islands bearing cargo, then they left as quickly as they had come. Tribal people had no time to learn the ways of civilization.

Civilization just swooped down and dropped itself on them. They saw high technology up close. These planes would come out of the sky, land in the jungle, leave their payload, and then take off. Island natives saw cigarette lighters and they saw them produce fire magically and thought they were miraculous. They saw large machinery push aside the forests to build the airstrips where these big planes could come in. For the first time they saw Jeeps and modern weapons and refrigerators and radios and power tools and many varieties of clothing and food.

They were fascinated, really, by all of that and the conclusion they made, somewhat naturally, was that the white men were gods and they flew in out of the sky with all the stuff. And their conclusion was that gods were beings who brought you lots of stuff. When the war was over, the armies were gone, tribesmen built shrines to the cargo gods. Their tabernacles were perfect replicas of airplanes or control towers or hangars made out of bamboo or some kind of woven natural material. They looked like the real thing, but all they were good for was a place of worship.

On some of the more remote islands, the cargo cults are still thriving today, right now, today. And if you go to some of those places, you will find that some of them have personified all Americans into one deity, and the name of that god is Tom Navy. They pray, the people do, for holy cargo to be dropped. And they venerate religious relics such as Zippo lighters, cameras, eyeglasses, ballpoint pens, nuts and bolts, other assorted things.

As civilization has begun to penetrate these remote islands where cargo cults exist, their fascination for cargo has not diminished. Missionaries who have been sent to those areas to preach the gospel find that the people involved in the cargo cults give them initially a warm reception because they think it's the second coming of the cargo gods. The problem is they're looking for the cargo, not the gospel. And missionaries find that they are so steeped in a materialism they don't even understand that they

cannot easily receive the gospel, and it has become very difficult to penetrate these cargo cultic peoples with saving truth.

Well, I look at that kind of strange, bizarre religious phenomena and I see in contemporary Christianity quite an interesting parallel to that. It may be called the Word-Faith movement or the Faith movement or the Faith formula or the Word of Faith or Hyper Faith or Positive Confession or Name It and Claim It or Health and Wealth Prosperity or whatever it is, it's the same old thing. It's sort of a new brand of the cargo cults where God is this God who dumps the goodies and their materialistic, external, tangible consumable products that He delivers.

These contemporary teachers teach, frankly, that prayer is a means for self-gratification. Prayer is a tool by which you get what you want, and primarily what you want is material. It is consumable. It is something you can hold in your hand. It is money, it is clothes, it is cars and houses and other material things. There is, in my mind, no difference between the strange, bizarre cargo cults of the South Pacific and contemporary prosperity preaching that reduces God to some kind of servant who, upon the whim and at the self-gratifying wish of anyone associated with Him, must dump the cargo. That's prevalent today. There is such a gross misunderstanding as a result of that of what prayer is all about that it needs to be corrected.

Now, that takes me to the passage before us. Open your Bible to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Second Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12 takes us into the prayer life of Paul. His prayer life is absolutely unlike the approach to God that I have just described. Paul doesn't pray for material things. He doesn't pray for consumable things. His prayers are much deeper than that. Listen to how he prays, 2 Thessalonians 1:11: "To this end also we pray for you, and we pray always that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

There's nothing material in that prayer. There's nothing consumable in that prayer. There's nothing self-gratifying about that prayer. The God to whom Paul prays is no cargo god. He doesn't bring radios and cameras and TVs and binoculars and Zippo lighters. That's not what Paul prays for. Paul has understood prayer for what it really is, on the deep level that God intended it to be. So as we look at these two verses, we've entitled this two-week study, "Praying for the Right Stuff."

True prayer is learning to think God's thoughts after Him, learning to desire God's desires with Him, learning to love what He loves and hate what He hates. And the deeper your prayer life becomes and the more it lines up with God's Will and God's longings and God's desires and God's loves and God's hates, the less trivia will occupy it, the less consumable things will be manifest, and the more your prayer will be sweeping grasps and affirmations of those spiritual realities that you know are close to the heart of God. You will pray like this: "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy

kingdom come, Thy Will be done.”

Prayer puts us in closest connection with God. It lifts us to Him. It puts us in the place of keeping company with God, and there in that company with an open Bible and an open heart, we learn to listen before we talk.

I find in my own personal life that the richest and purest and truest and most focused experiences of prayer that I have are when I pray before my open Bible because God's Will is revealed, God's heart is manifest, God's longings are made known to me. that which He loves is revealed, what He hates is revealed, and that translates into my affirmation and my prayer. This becomes a way of life.

We live on two levels. You may be involved in whatever routines take up your time and you may have to give a certain amount of your conscious mind to those routines. But one of the great realities of the human mind by the creation of God is that it can be dealing with more than one thing at the same time. It has the ability to split its attention. And while we all are dealing on the tangible, transitory level of the external life in which we are caught up, at the same time there is a consciousness that runs much deeper than that.

This was Paul. Paul could be teaching, preaching, planning, writing, working, exhorting, discipling, traveling, suffering, but all the time, underneath at another level, praying on a level that showed how deeply he understood the mind of God. If in your life prayer is reduced to some period of time identifiable in which you verbalize things to God or a period of time in which you stop everything else and get yourself in a unique position and focus your mind on God and lift up prayers even in a silent way, those, while being important, cannot be the whole of your prayer life. Your prayer life is simply a way of living and it goes on all the time. Your overt and obvious external activities demand a certain amount of attention, but there is that deeper level of comprehension that is going on all the time within you that is an unceasing communion with the living God.

It was so true of Paul's life that periodically as you read through his epistles, that lower level pops out. You could almost say it's like a volcano. There's a thin veneer, a thin crust on the surface of the earth, but underneath the earth is this boiling caldron of gas and fire, and every once in a while it bursts through the surface and the hot lava flows. So it was in the heart of Paul. There was a hot heart for God. There was an explosive relationship with God, and in the process of his writing or preaching, teaching, discipling, traveling, planning, preparing, every now and then, what was going on all the time underneath in the warmth of his communion with God would blow out the top. And so we find as we read his epistles that now and again, one of these prayers explodes onto the surface in a volcano of the heat of his heart. Such is verse 11 and 12.

Here we get to the deep level of Paul. He's not giving us some kind of an explanation of theology. He's not taking us through the logical progression of a doctrine. He's not giving us some kind of

reason for a certain exhortation. He's not defining for us a problem in the church in which he wants to give a solution. He is not attacking some issue. He is not dealing with some false doctrine or false teaching. Rather, all of a sudden we go below all of that and bursting out comes this hot lava of his prayer life. And we always note the word "always" because it seems to be always there. Whenever he says "we pray for you," he always says "always." And we have to ask the question: How can you do that? And the answer to the question is because there is this other level on which he lives in communion with God.

Paul, on that deep level where prayer truly exists, where prayer is an unending preoccupation, knows God very well. On that level, he understands the will of God for it's been revealed to him in the Scripture. He feels what God feels. He hurts where God hurts. He rejoices where God rejoices. He understands what God wants, what God longs for, what God loves, what God hates. It's part of spiritual maturity to know that. And consequently, his prayers are never shallow and they are never selfish and they are never shortsighted. They're always very deep, very profound, very spiritual. They always reach out to embrace things that are utterly unconsumable, things that you can't touch and feel. He isn't praying for the physical things.

And so I submit to you that this is a good point in our study of the Word of God to remind ourselves that many of us, for the most part, pray for the wrong stuff and Paul prayed for the right stuff. And I suppose for some of us, prayer is a periodic time in which we stop everything and focus on verbalizing our requests rather than an incessant way of life. Spiritual maturity, then, is marked by those two things. It is marked by an unceasing prayer life that goes on at a deep level beneath the surface of the normal things, and it is prayer that seeks the right stuff because it knows the mind and the heart and the Will of God.

Now, looking at these verses again, I remind you that last time we looked at point one, which is the resource itself. When he wanted something for his own, when he wanted something for the beloved people to whom he ministered, the resource was prayer. So verse 11: "To this end also we pray for you always." This underlying level of conscious communion with God always had inherent in it prayers for his churches. He saw prayer as the means to gain these spiritual ends. For Paul and for any mature Christian, prayer is a condition. Prayer is a condition. It is a state of mind. It is a permanent condition or a permanent state of mind by which the promises and purposes of God, the spiritual wellbeing of His people, the advance of His gospel, and the growth of His church are the passion of the believer. It's that kind of condition. It's living in a condition where you are consumed with the promises and purposes of God, with the wellbeing of His people, the advance of His gospel, and the growth of His church. And the things that concern you are the things that concern Him. It lines up your heart with God. And we saw something about the resource of prayer last time, about how it lines up with the sovereignty of God.

Let's go to the requests, that's point two in this text. What is it that he asks for? Lining up with God, knowing the mind and heart of God, what does Paul pray for? Verse 11: "That our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power." Those three things. Nothing selfish, nothing shallow, nothing external, nothing temporal, nothing consumable. This is rich, rich spiritual treasure that he prays for.

First of all, worthiness. Worthiness. "That our God may count you worthy of your calling." This is a broad request that really encompasses Christian character. "I pray that God will make you worthy." In other words, that God will enable you to deserve the name you bear. If you're going to go around saying you are Christ's and Christ is yours, then you ought to deserve that title. He uses the possessive pronoun "our God" just to remind his readers and us that God is not a distant ogre, God is not someone to be feared, God is not one who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but through, of course, Christ, has demonstrated that He is a tender and caring God. So in an intimate sense, he identifies God as our God. And he says our God wants to make you or count you – that verb can go either way in either case. If He makes you worthy, He'll count you worthy. If He counts you worthy, it'll be because He made you worthy. But our God wants to make you worthy so that you can be counted worthy of your calling.

Take that little statement "your calling" and let me help you to see what it means. Whenever you see the term "calling," "your calling" in the epistles of the New Testament, it refers to salvation. It's not the kind of call, say, that Jesus would use in the gospels where He says, "Many are called but few are chosen." That's just a gospel call where sinners are called to repent, unbelievers are called to believe, unsaved people are called to be saved. That's not the way it is used in the epistles. It is used of what theologians would call an efficacious or an effective calling to salvation. It is used for that time when God saves you. Your calling is the time when God called you, the reality of your salvation. You were called to Christ by God. You were drawn to salvation.

It's that sense, it's the sense of Romans chapter 8 where it says, "Whoever was predestined, He called and whom He called, He justified and whom He justified, He glorified." So there you have predestination, calling, justification, glorification – that's the flow of salvation. The predestined are called to salvation whereupon they are declared righteous whereupon they are set for glory. You see the same thing in Romans 11:29. Such callings of God are irrevocable. Such callings are irrevocable, they are permanent. Galatians 1:15, Paul talks about his salvation, and he calls it the time he was called. First Corinthians 1:26 talks about salvation as a calling. So it is the term which means an efficacious, effective calling to salvation.

You see the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 2:12: "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." It is a calling into the kingdom. It is a calling to glory. It is a saving call. It could be in the same terms that Jesus used when He spoke about the drawing of the Father – "No man comes except the Father draw him" – that's the essence of that call.

So he says, "Look, you have been called to salvation. You have been called to God, called to Christ, called to bear the name Christian. You have been called to be identified as God's people, God's child." Now he says, "I pray that our God may count you worthy of that calling, that you may be deserving of bearing that name." He wants you to be worthy.

That word brings to mind a number of things. In Romans 1:32, the Bible says that the ungodly are worthy of death. They are worthy of death. They're unworthy of salvation, and that includes all of us. None of us is worthy of salvation. So we can make the simple little point: God saves the unworthy. God, by grace, saves the unworthy. We can add to that this: God then makes the unworthy worthy. To the church at Sardis in Revelation 3 and verse 4 the Lord said, "For you are worthy." God saves the unworthy and makes the unworthy worthy. But beyond that, God wants them to become more worthy. He wants to increase that in the practical sense.

How can I understand that? Well, before you're a Christian you're unworthy. When you became a Christian, you became worthy in a positional sense; that is to say, just as you became righteous in the righteousness of Christ, so you became in that righteousness worthy. In other words, God made you worthy when you were unworthy and He did it by grace. You didn't earn it, you couldn't earn it, you couldn't do anything worthy of salvation, you can't do anything worthy enough to earn it, you can't do anything worthy enough to keep it. But God gives you a worthiness that is in Christ. When He declares you righteous and cloaks you in the righteousness of Christ, that makes you worthy.

So in the position that you occupy before God, you're worthy. But in the practical sense, Paul says, "I'm praying that God will make you worthy." In other words, He'll increase that worthiness. You see a similar thing back in verse 5 of chapter 1, how that God, through His chastening judgments, is making you worthy of the kingdom for which you are suffering. God wants you to be more worthy. He wants you to be more deserving to bear His name. He doesn't want you to be ashamed to His name, ashamed to His church.

So He wants to make you more worthy, to increase your worthiness, and He does it through suffering, chapter 1 verse 5. He brings suffering into your life that sort of peels away the flesh and drives you to Himself and brings spiritual maturity. And here in the positive note, Paul is praying that God would continue that process however it might need to work, that God would make you worthy of your calling. You already are in position, you need to be more and more worthy in practice. Someday in the future you'll be completely worthy because you'll be perfectly holy. But in the meantime, we need to become more worthy of bearing the name of Christ.

Christians are made worthy just as they're made righteous, but they need to become more righteous, they need to become more worthy. The matter of living up to that internal divine worthiness is stimulated by God's judging hand and it's stimulated by the Spirit of God as He moves in our lives through the Word and its application.

So he says I want you to be more worthy. I think that's a prayer that every pastor should pray, every pastor does pray. I want my people to be more worthy to bear the name of Christ. I don't want my people to bring reproach on Christ. I don't want my people to bring dishonor to His name. I don't want them to be the cause, like the Jews were, of God being depreciated. You remember he said the name of God was evil-spoken of because of their behavior in Romans 2? And there were some people in the Thessalonian church who weren't acting in a very worthy way – they weren't really worthy to bear the name. Look at chapter 3 verse 6: "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

There are some brethren out there who are in an unruly situation who are not following the tradition; that is, the Scripture, the Word, the teaching you receive from us. Verse 11. They're leading an undisciplined life. They aren't working and they're acting like busybodies. Stay away from those folks. There were some unworthy people. Worthy, yes, positionally covered with the righteousness of Christ. But in their practical life, they weren't worthy to be called a Christian.

You know, I believe that sometimes God just kills those people, takes them to heaven. They're not worthy to bear His name on earth. They're a reproach to Him. So he is praying that these people will walk in a manner worthy of the name they bear. You have a tremendous responsibility. You have a tremendous privilege, so do I, if we bear the name Christian to live in a worthy way to bear the name.

Look at Ephesians and I'll show you how this same thought is a somewhat recurring theme of significance in Paul's writings. Ephesians 4:1: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." You're to walk in a worthy way. And he defines it. "All humility, gentleness, patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." That's how you're to walk, that's what a worthy Christian does. A worthy Christian is humble and gentle and patient and forbearing and loving and seeks unity.

Look at Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1 verse 27: "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." How is that? Well, standing firm in one spirit, one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, never alarmed by your opponents, suffering willingly. That's how you are worthy. You walk in a worthy way when you pursue unity, when you stand firm, when you trust God in the midst of difficulty, when you endure suffering for His sake. Colossians 1:10, he says the same thing. This is what we pray for, "That you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." How? "Pleasing Him in everything in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, giving thanks," verse 12.

What's a worthy life? It's a life which pleases the Lord in all respects. It's a life which bears fruit in every good work, increases in knowledge, strengthened with power. It's a life which is thankful. That's a worthy life. And then, as I noted earlier, 1 Thessalonians 2:12 says the same thing: "Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory." And how are you to walk? Well, Paul said we walk this way, verse 10: "Devoutly, uprightly and blamelessly."

So you can see that this is a theme that Paul likes to go back to, this idea of worthiness, and he is saying, "I pray that God may increase your worthiness to bear the name of His Son." If you look at the New Testament and sum it up, it would go something like this: A worthy walk – and I'll give you a list, don't write it down, just listen. From the Scriptures I've read and several more, goes like this: A worthy walk is a walk in humility, a walk in purity, a walk in contentment, a walk by faith, a walk in righteousness, a walk in unity, a walk in gentleness, a walk in strength, a walk in patience, a walk in love, a walk in joy, a walk in thankfulness, a walk in light, a walk in knowledge, a walk in wisdom, a walk in truth and a walk in fruitfulness. Summing it up, if you say Christ and you are related – 1 John 2:6 – then you ought to walk as He walked.

This, then, is a comprehensive request. He is praying that God would enable Christians to live out their spiritual worthiness. They are worthy by virtue of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. They someday will be worthy to walk with Him in white because all sin will be gone, and in the meantime, he wants their worthiness to increase to encompass all of life. That's a prayer for Christian character, Christian virtue.

The second request – the second request is really for goodness. For goodness. He says the second request simply in these words: "That our God may fulfill every desire for goodness." I'd like to even call that point fulfillment. He prays that God would give them fulfillment. The word there, *plrs*, means to accomplish. "God, please accomplish in their lives everything they desire when what they desire is good by Your definition." That's his prayer. That God would fulfill their every longing for what is good.

Where do you find what is good? Well, Jesus said there is one good, and that is God. So the one who has the completely good agenda is God. And he is simply saying, "God, I want You to give them everything that they desire as long as – by Your definition – it is good." Boy, that's a powerful point. "I want them to know fulfillment. I want their prayers to be answered. I want their dreams to come true, their desires to be fulfilled, their longings to be realized. But only if they're good by Your definition."

Back in the Psalms, we get a little insight into this kind of prayer. Psalm 21. I'll just read these to you, verses 2 and 3: "Thou hast given him his heart's desire and Thou hast not withheld the request of his lips for Thou dost meet him with the blessings of good things." That's the key. "You gave him what he wanted, You gave him what he asked for because it was good, because You saw that it was good." Psalm 37, I know you remember, a very familiar and helpful text. Listen to verse 4: "Delight yourself in

the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Wait a minute – will God give you everything your heart desires? Yes, if you’re delighting in Him. The point is if you are delighting in Him, then your desires are His desires – He’s first. And so when you pray, He’ll give you what you pray for because it will be consistent with His desire. When you delight in the Lord, your longing will be for goodness, and God will fulfill your longing.

One other note in the Psalms is in Psalm 138 verse 8: “The Lord will accomplish what concerns me.” The Lord will accomplish what concerns me – why is the psalmist so brash as to say, “God’s going to do what’s on my agenda”? The answer is because it had already been made evident in that Psalm that his agenda was God’s agenda. James says, “Look, you ask and you don’t receive” – why? – “because you want to consume it on your own lusts.” You’re asking for self-gratification. Paul says, “God, give them everything their heart desires when what their heart desires is” – what? – “good by Your definition.” That’s a fulfilled life.

And I know that most people probably assume that God is reluctant to make anybody happy, that God gets some satisfaction out of being a cosmic killjoy, that God feels that there’s got to be a little bit of raining on everybody’s parade just to remind them who’s in charge, that God wants to leave people with a sort of permanent misery to remind them that He’s stringent and demanding. That’s not really so. God wants to give you the desire of your heart. When you go to Him in prayer, He wants to give you the desire of your heart as long as the desire of your heart which you ask for is a desire that you’ve learned by listening and you know His mind and His Will. Psalm 145:16 says, “He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing.” That’s God. God is generous and gracious. He longs to give His children what they long for, but He longs for them to long for what they ought to long for. And He knows that when they get it, it’ll bring praise. Psalm 90:14 says that: “When I give you what you ask for, you’re going to sing a song to Me.”

So what does Paul pray for? What’s the right stuff to pray for? What should you pray for in your own life, the lives of those you love, the people in your church? You pray for their worthiness. Pray that their Christian virtue will grow. Pray that their Christian character will grow. And then you pray for their fulfillment, that God will do in their life the fulfilling of every good thing which they long for because they know God longs for it, too. If you want to get your prayers answered, then listen and know the mind of God and the heart of God and pray for what is good by His definition and He’ll give it to you.

Third request: Prays for their power. He wants them to be a worthy people, a fulfilled people, and a powerful people. “Pray that our God may fulfill” – we’ll borrow the verb there because I think it’s intended to be that way – “that our God may fulfill the work of faith with power.” That our God may accomplish your efforts powerfully. They already were involved in the work of faith back in 1 Thessalonians 1:3. He said, “I already thank God for your work of faith.” Listen, there’s no such thing as a faith that doesn’t work, right? Faith without works is what? Dead.

James 2:17-26 is explicit in saying that: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I'll show you my faith by my works.'" In other words, "How are you going to show me your faith? I can't see it." The only way you can show it is in your works. And he goes on to describe that. Faith works, he says. Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. So they had a real saving faith and it showed up, it worked, it produced fruit. He says, "I thank God for your work of faith." But what he's praying for now is, "I am asking God to make that work of faith powerful." Not just minimal but maximal.

He understood salvation by grace through faith alone, but he also understood that a salvation by grace through faith alone produced works. "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works" – Ephesians 2:10 – "which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." He understood that. True saving faith is going to produce works. But he said, "I want those works to be powerful." This is the right stuff, this is really the right stuff.

You say, "By the way, how can that happen? How does that happen, that powerful kind of thing?" Well, you can go back into Ephesians 3 and you get a hint. 3:15, Paul's praying and he identifies God in verses 14 and 15. And then in 16, here's his request: "That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." That's the key. The power of God is released according to what I just read you by the Spirit of God in the inner man. You say, "How does that happen?" By letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly until the Word of God dominates your heart. He says, "I want your work of faith to be powerful and I want your longings for goodness to be fulfilled and I want your life to be worthy to bear the name of Christ." That's the right stuff to pray for. That's what you ought to pray for, for your partner in life, for your children, for your friends, for the people you love, for your church. We get stuck like a broken record on the temporal things.

And lastly, the reason. The resource for His desires for this church: prayer. The requests: worthiness, fulfillment, power. Now the reason – this is so basic, so important. Verse 12: "In order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Here's the reason: The purpose isn't for you; the purpose is for the Lord "in order that" or "for the purpose that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified." There's that little possessive pronoun "our" again. It's speaking of the intimacy with which we are related to Christ even as we are to God. Here is the highest purpose, the highest motive, the greatest reason you are to become like this: in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him. It's for His glory.

Let me break it down a moment. See that phrase, "the name of our Lord"? "The name of the Lord"? That is an Old Testament title for God. You see it in Genesis 4:26, Exodus 33:19, Deuteronomy 5:11,

Isaiah 42:8, Isaiah 56:6. It's a title for God. And here it says, "The name of our Lord Jesus," which is clearly and unequivocally identifying Jesus as God, Jehovah God, the God of the Old Testament. The term "name" means all that He is, the totality of the Lord. "All that the Lord is" would be another way to say that in a different fashion. So he says, "All of this I want in you in order that all that the Lord Jesus is may be honored, exalted, lifted up."

You remember in Daniel 9 when Daniel was praying for his people. He prayed and prayed and prayed through that whole wonderful chapter for the needs of his people, and then at the end of that section, he tells the reason why. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and take action for Thine own sake." Why? "Because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." "Your reputation is at stake, God, please do this, your name is at issue here, your reputation is at stake." You know as well as I do, friends, that the number one excuse that people give for not wanting to become Christians is they will say, "Well, I know some Christians and they are basically" – fill in the blank – "hypocrites." That always is an excuse people use.

And that was what Daniel was saying. "Lord, look, You've got to do something here because Your name is at stake, Your reputation is at stake in the lives of Your people. They bear Your name." That's what Paul is saying. "God, I'm asking You to do this and Your name is at stake and the glory of Your name is at stake." "I want those who bear the name of the Lord Jesus to bring honor to it" – this is a wonderful thing he says – "in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in You." Wow, what a thought, that God, the Lord Jesus Christ, could be glorified in me, this earthen vessel, this humble clay, this sinful flesh. But that's it. Just as His glory could shine on the face of Moses, so it can shine through me. That's why Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

See, we're to live so that God is glorified. He wants to be glorified in you, says Paul. "O God, do this that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in these people and these people in Him." What does that mean? It's reciprocal. If He's glorified through you – in other words, if He is honored through you, then He will honor you, He'll exalt you, He'll lift you up. You're saying, "Is that talking about eternal glory?" Sure. "Is it also talking about perhaps in this life?" Perhaps. God is so gracious, He gives us the privilege of glorifying Christ in us and then says, "And He will also glorify you, He'll honor you." Sure, in the future He'll glorify us, but even now I believe our God will lift up those who glorify His name. He'll lift them up with blessing. What a tremendous thing.

I pray – and here's the reason – that the Lord Jesus, in the fullness of who He is, may be glorified in you and that in turn as He is glorified in you, He will exalt you, He will honor you, He will lift you up. Very simple spiritual principle. You honor Christ, Christ honors you.

Paul's desire here is expressed no better than in 2 Corinthians 8:23 by Paul himself. Just listen to this. He says, "Concerning Titus, my partner and fellow worker among you, and as for our brethren" –

he says this, talking about the Christian fellowship: "As for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ." Wow. Those who are our brethren who are messengers of the churches, those who serve, are a glory to Christ, they are an honor to Him. Isn't that your goal, to be an honor to Christ and He in turn will honor you? He will.

William Barclay expressed it, I think, when he said, "A teacher's glory lies in the scholars he produces. A parent's glory lies in the children whom he has begotten. A master's glory lies in his disciples." And that's the same it is with Christ. His glory lies in those who belong to Him. Can there be any privilege and can there be any responsibility greater than that? He glorifies us because we glorify Him. Someday that will happen, but I think even now He will lift up the one who lifts Him up.

And then he closes by saying, "And all of this is according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." "That's why I'm praying, God, cause You're the only one that can do it and You have to do it by grace cause these people don't deserve it, they don't deserve to be made worthy, they don't deserve to have their desires fulfilled and they certainly don't deserve to serve with power. But I want You to do it. I want You to do it by grace even though they don't deserve it in order that You might get the glory." That's what he's saying, "Do it by grace." Listen, everything that comes to you in your Christian life is by grace, just like your salvation was.

And then this phrase at the end: the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. When you look at the original language there and you try to figure out what the writer is really trying to say with those two terms "God" and "the Lord Jesus Christ," you can come up with two pretty equally defensible views. One is that he's talking about one person: God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's actually calling God the Lord Jesus Christ or calling the Lord Jesus Christ God, and there's one person in view. You also can see it as two, God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In both cases, he's affirming the deity of Christ because in case number one, he's talking about one person, God who is the Lord Jesus Christ; in case number two, he's talking about God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Number one, it's one person; number two, it's two equal people. So in either case, again, the affirmation of the deity of Christ. And he is totally dependent on sovereign God/sovereign Christ to dispense this answer to his prayers by grace because we don't deserve it.

So what do you seek for in your prayers? What do you ask for? I hope you're not in to the cargo cult. What do you look for? What do you seek for? What do you want for you? For everybody else? The right stuff, I hope. And maybe if you don't talk so much and listen more, you'll learn what the right stuff is.

Thank You, Father, for this great text directing us toward a proper understanding of prayer. May it find its way into the very fabric of our lives, and may we live like Paul with that hot lava, as it were, of zealous communion with You under the surface, at that deeper level, which when bursting forth always prays according to Your will. We want to pray in the Spirit, and we know the Spirit always

prays according to Your will. Father, we would pray for our church that You would make them and count them worthy of their calling, that You would fulfill every desire for goodness, and that You would fulfill the work of faith with great power in order that Jesus Christ might be glorified in them and then consequently they will be honored by Him, and we ask this not because we deserve it but because You're a gracious God and we want to honor You, in Your Son's name. Amen.

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