

## New Humanity Prayer is Humble and Kingdom Focused

**Intro:** This New Humanity, created in Christ Jesus, is being built up for the glory of God. God's transcendent mystery made imminent in the reconciliation and bringing together of all things under the Lordship of Jesus begins in the Church. Upon this great reconciliation between God and man Paul has expounded eloquently in Ephesians chapter 1. In chapter 2 he beautifully reveals the mystery of reconciliation between people as the gospel of grace calls every person to repent of trusting their own performance and to trust in the performance of Jesus. It is here that peoples from all cultures, languages, and races are made into one new race: Christian.

This healing of enemies is what God is doing. So we pray. Why do we pray? Because is the only one who can transform hearts and change minds by the power of His sovereign Spirit. We pray because we are weak and do not have the internal power to change our own hearts to reconcile with enemies, forgive debtors, or labor with love for those across the globe. We need to be transformed, and God has promised to do it. So we pray. We ask God to do what we cannot do in and of ourselves. In John 15:16 Jesus makes the link for us between bearing fruit and prayer: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." We are called to bear fruit, but the fruit comes from God, so we ask for it. He is the Supplier of all that we need to fulfill His purpose and plan in this world. Prayer is the dependent cry of the child, longing to complete the mission that his Father has sent him to do. Jesus is building His Church. He has promised to do it (Matt 16:18) and He will not fail. So why pray? Because we are dependent upon God's sovereign grace to complete the work He began and to give us the internal and external resources that we need to glorify Him.

In Ephesians 3:14 Paul picks up where the rabbit-trail began back in verse 1. He got pretty excited talking about this New Humanity of former racial enemies and now he has come back to original thought. "For this reason" he prays for the Gentile believers.

1. New Humanity Prayer is "Other-Centered"
  - a. "For this reason" refers back to verse 1
    - i. Paul is praying for the Gentiles b/c he has been called *for them* ("for your glory" in v13)
    - ii. Paul is praying that God would be known, praised (1:3, 6, 12, 14, 21; 3:10, 21) *for He is alone is worthy forever and ever.*
      1. The first "other" that we center on in prayer is the Supplier, the Father
      2. We need His resources, for His purposes, for His glory
  - b. Paul is praying in the light of all the riches of Christ given to the Gentiles in Christ
    - i. It is the unity of the "one new humanity" in the church, without racial divides or social hierarchy that calls Paul to pray for all of them
      1. This has been eloquently magnified through his parenthetical repose of vss. 2-13
      2. He cares deeply for his brothers and sisters.
      3. Even back to the blessings listed in chapter 1, he prays that they would grasp them in their inner selves.
        - a. "every spiritual blessing in Christ" -1:3
        - b. "you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" - 2:22
    - ii. Great plans + Great prospects = Great petition (Bruce Milne)
      1. God bringing all things together under the headship of Jesus (1:10)
      2. Peoples from every culture and tribe brought together through faith in Jesus as our Redeemer and Lord
      3. This great mysterious plan of God revealed through Christ is reason for great petition and zealous prayer for God to make it happen.

## 2. New Humanity Prayer is Humbly Bold

- a. “bow my knees” – posture of humility
  - i. Humble
  - ii. Worship
  - iii. Euphemism for prayer
    1. Scripture nowhere demands one manner of physical posture in prayer, but it does demand the posture of the heart: humility
    2. We dare not enter into the presence of God presumptuously, as if God was here to do our bidding
    3. In prayer, though given confident access through Christ, the profane is covered in the holy to be present with the HOLY
      - a. God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29; Deut 4:24-25)
      - b. God hates the presence of sin (Nahum 1:2-6; Deut 9:18)
- b. Prayer is in the presence of **the Father**
  - i. We have boldness and confident access into the very presence of this holy God!
    1. V13 – no tribulation is devastating
      - a. Weakness does not imply sin, error, or defeat
      - b. Paul had spent 4 years in prison writing Eph., Col., Phil.,
    2. Greg Herrick quote:

“Every now and again we must be reminded that the Lord’s Prayer begins with ‘Our Father’ and not ‘Our needs.’ Prayer involves *access to the presence of God, first and foremost.*”
    3. C.S. Lewis quote:

“The very question, ‘Does prayer work?’ puts us in the wrong frame of mind from the outset. ‘Work’: as if it were magic, or a machine – something that functions automatically. Prayer is either a sheer illusion or a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person. Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God its wine. In it God shows Himself to us. That He answers prayer is a corollary – not necessarily the most important one – from the revelation. What He does is learned from Whom He is.”
    4. not in our profanity and sin
      - a. Do not presume upon God’s holiness, nor lose the fear of sin’s severity in His sight
      - b. Presumption in God’s presence leads to judgment (Acts 5:1-11, Ananias and Sapphira)
        - i. Lying to the Holy Spirit
        - ii. Satanic to presume on God
        - iii. Testing the Spirit
  - ii. We enter only in Christ’s righteousness and faithfulness
    1. Hebrews 6:17-20
    2. 1 cor 1:30-31
    3. brokenness and repentance leads to powerful prayer and powerful Spirit-strengthened living and preaching in ourselves and in others
      - a. The disciples were proud, competitive (Matt 18:1; 19:27; 20:20-24), and prayerless (Matt 26:37-46) until they were made powerless of themselves (Acts 1:13-14; 2:42-47)

- b.
- c. as we see how we ourselves contaminate the water, we will understand that we need the purifier
- d. the deeper the contrition over sin, the greater the joy of redemption
- iii. We come into the presence of the FATHER
  - 1. relationship of love, not business or barter
  - 2. pray according to the promises of the Faithful One, our Father who loves us and has made many promises to us
    - a. Ephesians 6:17-18
      - i. Sword of the Spirit = Word of God
      - ii. We wield the sword of the Spirit by praying the Word of God, His promises already made
    - b. The prayers prayed according to the promises of God are effective and WILL be answered with a resounding “YES!”
    - c. The prayers prayed according to the promises are prayers made from the heart of God by His Spirit to the heart of God, they are God’s not ours
      - i. Jude 1:24-25, example of promise
      - ii. Psalm 37:4
      - iii. Rom 5:3-5
  - 3. We pray according to our view of God: A.W. Tozer quote:  
 “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us....the gravest question before the church is always God himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like....Always the most revealing thing about the church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about him or leaves unsaid....Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might be able to predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we might be able with some precision to foretell where the church will stand tomorrow.”
- iv. He is the Father of the *entire* family of Christians
  - 1. again an emphasis on the One New Humanity in Christ
    - a. Two Possible interpretations:
      - i. Every family group derives its name from the Father
      - ii. The entire Christian family, those from all people groups united in Jesus, on heaven and in earth, is named in the Father
    - b. I believe the 2<sup>nd</sup> for the following reasons:
      - i. the context is relating to the One New Humanity in Christ, the Church, not all of humanity
      - ii. The name “family” in the Greek is specifically “fathered” and has the idea of a lineage based upon the common fatherhood of God; the familiar relationship mentioned, applying only to those in Christ, adopted as His sons
  - 2. It’s still about grace
    - a. We are humble in His presence because we are not there due to our righteousness or success or cultural superiority.
    - b. We are bold in His presence because we are there based upon Christ’s righteousness and success and faithfulness.

Conclusion:

Prayer in the New Humanity (that is you, O Church) is other-centered and boldly humble. May we not treat prayer lightly or impotently. We have been given the great opportunity, even command, to enter into the presence of our Father and ask for what we need to accomplish His great plan. Do we need humility? Ask Him for it? Do we need wisdom and understanding? Ask Him for it? Do we need strength to turn from our hearts' idols and trust in Jesus more deeply? Ask Him for it!

And don't just ask for these promises of God for yourself or for your "local family," either! Ask for these promised blessings for those family members around the world. Ask the Father that our entire family would be strengthened to seize onto the reality and greatness of His love toward them. As they suffer intense persecution and temptation, bring their need to the Father in humble confidence. For in our place, wrapping us in His holiness, we have a Savior who holds us secure and has promised every spiritual blessing to every believer in Jesus in all places and in all times.

Let us take our eyes off of our own perceived righteousness and place them onto the imputed righteousness of Jesus on our behalf. May we learn to see fellow believers in Jesus from every culture and every people group around the world as our brothers and sisters, our family. Let us treat them as family, praying passionately for their peace in Christ, for their hearts to fully grasp His greatness and love toward them, and all of these things so that His praise would expand throughout all the earth to the glory of His majestic and holy Name.