

The Culture of the Kingdom The Prayer of Faith

Studio Session 153

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The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers and the Lord added to their numbers every day those who were being saved.

Now we had been talking about these four elements of the culture of the kingdom and in the preceding message I'd introduced prayer as like incense coming up for a memorial before God and we saw that the requirement of prayer is that on the earth we agree with heaven. When you are young in the Lord and you do not really know nor do you have confidence in what heavens desires are, then you're free to pray whatever you want to. And normally, the prayers of a young believer are preoccupied with their natural circumstances. So when you're young in the Lord you'll pray for jobs, when you're young in the Lord you'll pray for a husband or a wife if you're unmarried and of suitable age, you'll pray for a better house, you'll pray for a new car or better car. You'll pray for those things that have to do with your daily bread. The Lord has told us though that there is a seeking first of the kingdom that allows you to relax with respect to all these things for which you have a daily need. In the sixth chapter of the book of Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Don't preoccupy yourself with food or drink or wherewithal you should be clothed," don't let your prayers be obsessed with these things, "because the Gentiles," the unbelievers, "seek after these things. But you, you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

You see, when you're young in the Lord, you're young because you don't know the ways of God. "The kingdom of God is not food or drink," Romans 14:17 says, "but it is instead righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." When you're born again you can see the kingdom, John 3:5; when you're born of the Spirit you can enter the kingdom. Seeing the kingdom is different from entering the kingdom. When you're born again you may see the kingdom but you may be still preoccupied with what you'll eat, drink or wherewithal you'd be clothed. You know that you're moving away from this infancy of your faith to a mature faith when you begin to seek the kingdom because your prayers will be less and less about food and drink and more and more about the will of God being done on the earth as it is in heaven and you entering the will of God as it is being done in the earth.

You begin to make that transition in your thinking.

So your prayers then, go from being answered if they do not result in harm or hurt to you, to your prayers being routinely answered because they are aligning you, positionally in the earth with the throne of God. You may align yourself with the dictates of heaven while you're on the earth and God will give you the outcome of your prayers. In the proceeding message we were talking about Acts 4 where the disciples - agreeing with the apostles doctrine namely that Jesus was and is the King - began to pray to God that God would grant to them the privilege of representing the Lord by doing great miraculous signs and wonders not so that the earth would say how wonderful they were or how powerful or well connected they were because the event that had put Peter and John in prison was that they had performed a pretty outstanding miracle at the gate called Beautiful when they healed the man who had been laid at that gate for many years. So it was an outstanding miracle that got these apostles in trouble.

When the early church was asking for miracles, signs and wonders to be done by the average believer, the average believer was asking to be put in the same position of endangerment as had occurred to the apostles Peter and John when they healed the man at the Beautiful Gate. You see, if we see it without it's context then we would say, "Well it's right to be asking to do great miraculous signs and wonders." Well that's true if that's what God wants to do through you but in that day that is clearly what God wanted to do, it was what the apostles were doing, it was what got them in trouble and it was by agreeing with them that God would in fact use every believer as light in the world. What they were asking for - yes it was to be able to perform miracles - but no it wasn't to authenticate their ministry, they were asking for the right to represent the Lord even if it meant for them imprisonment or death. That's a very different thing. And only mature believers will pray for the kingdom to come and the will of God to be done in the earth as it is in heaven even if it means personal sacrifice and great sorrow to come upon those who were praying for it.

Now when they had prayed in that fashion because it was the will of God - it was what God was doing at the time - when they had prayed in that fashion, the place where they were sitting was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit because God answered them instantaneously. And from that point on, the church was put on a collision course with the interests of the nation of Israel and in the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ there was not ever going to be a turning back from that point on. The whole earth - before the first century was over - the whole earth had been affected by this gospel because it wasn't just the apostles who were preaching it, it was all those who signed on for it asking that they be put in harms way if that were required for Christ to be revealed as King.

Now in the New Testament, there are other additional examples of prayer and one is

called the prayer of faith in James chapter 5. Now this has been much reported upon in current church teachings, so let's see what the Bible actually says is the prayer of faith, "Is any of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." And it goes on to give examples of Elijah praying.

Fascinating, isn't it? Because it speaks of prayer in a particular fashion. Why, in this prayer for example, are two references to the forgiveness of sins? It seems an odd thing if you're praying for someone to be healed. Here he says at the very last of it, "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven." So that's the first reference to sin and forgiveness in connection with this prayer and the other is, "therefore (because this is true) confess your sins to each other and pray for each other." So what is he talking about? Prayer resulting in healing. Well this is a particular type of prayer for a particular situation. You see, often sickness is the result of sin; not all sickness is because of sin. Not every time that someone is sick is that person in sin. Paul spoke of one of his companions who was sick nearly to death. Paul himself refers to having 'impediments' in his flesh. So it's not all sickness that is the result of sin, sometimes sickness is the result simply of the malfunctioning of the human body, the Scriptures say, "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

This human construction we live in is subject to sickness but sometimes the sickness is an attack from the enemy because of sin. Now the enemy won't attack you unless he has some legal ground, if you have given the enemy legal ground, be sure that he will attack you. And one of his attacks is sickness, it's not his only attack, sometimes he'll attack you with accusations which is not sickness - mental or physical. But sometimes he will attack you with sickness. The Scriptures say for example, "When we fail to discern the Lord's body, for this reason some are weak and sick," because failure to discern the Lord's body is sin; it's a sin against the Body of Christ. Go back to I Corinthians 11 where this whole thing is discussed. The problem there was some of them were eating and drinking without discerning the Lord's body and for this reason some were weak and sick. Sin against the Body is when you fail to discern the Body and sickness may be a direct and proximate result of that because sickness is one of the ways the enemy attacks you.

So what should you do when somebody is sick? The answer is you should discern whether that sickness is based upon an attack by the enemy by reason of sin, whether that sin is the person's own sin or a generational iniquity to which that person has been made subject by being born in that family line. Now who is to discern this? The word says let

the elders discern it, "If there are any sick among you, send for the elders of the church," the elders should discern in that instance and they should pray over the person. Now one of the things they're empowered to do is to forgive the sin in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is because Jesus would forgive the sin. The representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ - in that case elders - are also fully empowered to declare Jesus' forgiveness of the sin. You should do that before prayer is offered for the person because the forgiveness of the sin will cancel the authority of the enemy - the legal authority of the enemy - to oppress that person. Whether it's the persons own sins or the sins of their ancestors, the elders have the authority by Christ as His representatives, to declare that sin forgiven.

When that happens, the legal basis upon which that person is oppressed by the enemy with sickness, is canceled. And when they anoint that person with oil – oil being a representation of the Holy Spirit – they're placing that person under the umbrella of protection that is in the Body of Christ. So the act of anointing with oil is not some magical thing and it's definitely not about some medicinal remedy that - as some have suggested - that is being applied. It is to put the person squarely under the authority and the provisions of Christ for his healing by symbolizing, through the anointing, that they have been placed under the Holy Spirit. Two things will happen in that instant if the sickness is related to demonic oppression. The first is: the sin will be forgiven. The second is: the illness will depart, the person will be healed. Both things.

So in conjunction with that, when the elders come they should make an inquiry into the condition of the person to determine if the sickness is the result of sin... whether the persons sin or the sin of their ancestors or the sin of someone with whom you've been associated such as a husband or a wife. Once that determination is made, a discernment is made, because the elders are called to judge these matters, once they've judged the matter then they're empowered to forgive. But the person must renounce the sin, the person must renounce the error, once they do that then the elders are empowered to express to that person the forgiveness of Christ. Upon that being expressed then the spirit that keeps the sickness in place, will be dismissed, it's assignment will be over because it can no longer legally oppress the person who has confessed the sin and for whom the sin has been rendered forgiven. When that occurs, then not only will the sin be forgiven and the spirit released, but the condition of malady that was held in place by this arrangement will disappear. You will recall the incident in which Jesus entered into the temple and a woman was bent over double, Jesus drove out the demon and the womans condition immediately was remedied; she straightened up.

There was a young man with epilepsy in another occasion and the demons would throw the boy into the fire and try to drown him in water. Jesus drove out the demons and the young boy was immediately healed. Not all of the healings of Christ were in the driving out of demons because not all sickness is related to a demonic connection based in sin.

But for those that are, the elders should exercise judgment and the result of which will be the forgiveness of sins and the healing of the person. That is actually what the Scriptures are teaching about the prayer of faith. Why is it called the prayer of faith? It is faith in the operation of God, faith in the fact that the elders are representative of God's authority in the earth and that as such they've been empowered against the demonic to render judgments in the earth that God will honor in heaven and demons must obey and the conditions resulting from demonic activity will also dissipate. Not all healing is done in this fashion obviously because not all healing is required in connection with demonic interference, some healing will take place over time. Not all healings are miraculous, in the sense of instantaneous, but some are. And not even every healing that is instantaneous is based in a demonic circumstance. But all healings that are based in demonic involvements become instantaneous healings, it may take time for the body to adjust to functioning normally after years of demonic oppression. But once the root is cut and the authority has been released then the body will experience healing.

Prayer then, was of a variety of sorts in the New Testament. Prayer as incense coming up before God is that kind of prayer that aligns the individual on the earth with the realities of heaven. And when that prayer reaches heaven through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ - because it is already the will of God in heaven and now it is meant to be the will of God on the earth - God will mix that prayer with the authority of God's throne, symbolized by fire, and He will hurl it into the earth and whatever you pray for...this is the prayer Jesus is speaking about when He says, "Whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name shall be granted to you," it is the prayer that aligns you in the earth with heaven. Merely stating the name of Jesus is not what He's speaking about, merely putting the name of Jesus as a tailend to your prayer is not what He's speaking about; He's speaking about the prayers that ascend as incense which prayers have in mind to align you (the one praying) to heaven and to do that through the Lord Jesus which means "according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ". You see, His will is known from in heaven to the earth. Whoever in the earth is praying according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, that prayer will be answered and answered powerfully. That was the example of the New Testament church in Acts 4.

The elders have a prayer - an administrative prayer - for healing relative to those people who have been demonically oppressed. When the elders acting as agents of the Lord Jesus Christ declare someones sins to be forgiven pursuant to that person confessing that sin, once the diagnosis has been made that this sickness is held in place by some incident of sin, whether it's the persons sin or a generational sin. The elders discern that and make that declaration. The person so afflicted then repents, whether of their own sins or the sins of their generations. That sin is forgiven. And the sickness that is the invasion of the enemy through that opportunity, that sickness then is healed and that operation routinely takes place instantaneously.

My own experience with this. I was in the country of Mexico on one occasion and I was called to pray for a woman who was sick. I visited her in her bed chamber where she was sick in bed and had been there for a long time. She was an older woman and one of her friends of the same vintage was there with her. And when she saw me pray over the one who was in bed, her friend asked me if I would pray for her as well. So when I inquired as to what her illness was, she explained that she had been sick for 28 years and that she attributed her sickness to a curse that had been put on her some time earlier, sometime 28 years before, and that she had been sick with this condition for a very long time, off and on, never so sick that she was in bed but never fully so alert that she felt well.

Well I immediately discerned that she was not a believer because if the root of the sickness were a curse then when she became a believer – because Jesus was a made a curse for us – she would have been instantaneously delivered from that curse. But, having discerned that, I led her to Christ. I talked to her about the good news and she accepted the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ over her and herself as a subject to Christ the King. Then I said to her, "Because you have made yourself subject to Christ, your sins are forgiven," and upon declaring her forgiveness of sins, I then spoke to the demon and I said, "This woman is now under the protection of Jesus Christ the King. Her sin has been forgiven, therefore your right to oppress her is over. Depart from her now." It was no more difficult than what I'm explaining to you. She instantly began to cough and indicated that she wanted to throw up. She went to where she could, into the bathroom, did that, came back and was instantly healed. She had been sick for 28 years.

Part of the problem with the present church is that it does not understand prayer as incense, it does not understand prayer as the prayer of faith; it rolls everything together and makes no distinction. As a young believer you are free to pray for anything you want to and most of the time God will give you exactly what you're asking for because He wants you to see that there's a direct correlation between your prayers and the answers that He gives. But as you become mature, He will require you to pray as the mature. And when you pray in this fashion, the kingdom will come in your life and the will of God will be done on the earth as it is in heaven. This practice of mature praying became the standard norm for the early church, part of the culture of the early church.

I'm Sam Soleyn and we'll talk more about these matters. God bless you, I'll see you next time. Bye bye.