

## INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago, I was channel surfing on my satellite radio, and I heard a pop song that kept repeating, "What do you want from me?" I tend to baptize, or biblicize everything I hear, so that phrase made me wonder if people ever stop and ask God, "God, what do you want from me?"

It is a glorious truth that the Creator of the Universe wants to have an intimate relationship with you. In other words, God WANTS to know you and He wants you to know Him. But have you ever wondered what God wants to do in and through your life?

There are a couple of ways for you to discover the answer to this question. First, you can find God's will for your life in the Bible. And second, you can find out what God wants to do in and through you by praying.

Prayer really works. One day three guys named Dave, Bob, and Sam were hiking and they came to a fast moving river. Dave lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "Dear God, give me the strength to cross this river." So he dove in and swam like crazy. It took him almost an hour and he almost drowned, but he finally made it. Bob prayed, "Dear God, give me the strength and the tools to cross this river." He looked around and saw an old boat tied to a tree, so Bob hopped in it and started rowing across. The boat leaked and he capsized, and hung on for dear life, but after about thirty minutes, he made it. Sam looked at his two exhausted friends on the other side of the river, and decided to pray a different prayer. He said, "Dear God, give me the strength, the tools, and the intelligence to cross this river." Poof! God turned Sam into a woman; she looked at the map and then walked a hundred yards north and walked across a bridge."

In this second letter to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul writes about the final victory of Jesus when He comes to judge sinners. And then he breaks out in a prayer for them. Let's read his prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-12.

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so 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."

The most basic truth we can gather from this great prayer is that it is good for us to pray for one another. Paul concluded his first letter by writing that they should "pray continually." And here he tells them that he is praying for them continually.

The greatest thing we can do for each other is to pray for one another. I need you to pray for me and the other leaders of our church. We need to pray for our church and for our nation. When

spiritual awakening comes to America, it will be as the result of a mighty revival of prayer. You can never pray too much, but you can certainly pray too little.

In 1 Samuel 12, the prophet Samuel is giving his farewell address to the Israelites. He says, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you." (1 Samuel 12:23)

The worst thing about prayerlessness is what it says about your attitude toward God. A prayerless person is saying, "God I don't really need your help. I can handle it by myself."

And Paul was very specific about his prayers. He didn't just write, "I'm praying for you." He told them exactly WHAT he was praying for them. When we dissect this short, powerful prayer, we discover three answers to the question, "What Does God Want with Me?"

## **I. GOD WANTS TO MAKE ME WORTHY OF HIS CALLING**

His first prayer was, "We constantly pray... that our God may make you worthy of his calling." God is calling you, are you listening to His call? His first call to you is the call of salvation. He says, "Come to Jesus for forgiveness!" In John 6:44 Jesus said no person can come to Him unless the Father draws him or her.

God's second call to all of us is the call of surrender. Jesus said that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. That means we must die to our own desires and allow Him to be our life. God wants to do more than just forgive your sin. He places the Holy Spirit in your life to control your thoughts and actions. But we must daily surrender to His control.

God's third call is the call of service. God doesn't save you so you can just punch your ticket to heaven. He calls every one of us to serve Him in some capacity – and He gives us spiritual gifts to enable us to serve Him. Are you hearing His call? He doesn't just call us once; He constantly calls us to follow Him.

Are you worthy of His calling? I know I'm not. But God didn't call us because we are worthy. The Bible says, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Corinthians 1:26-27)

So none of us are worthy of His calling. That's why He has to MAKE us worthy. In other words, once we have heard God's call to salvation, surrender, and service, He changes us. He sees potential in us. But this is a constant process. We never attain a state of full worthiness.

It's like we're running a race, and we won't cross the finish line until Jesus returns or until we die. Paul expressed this idea of a race when he wrote, "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Notice Paul didn't say, "These fifty things I do." He said, "This ONE thing I do." I forget the past and I press toward the finish line of what He called "the prize for which God has called me." He had a single passion in life—to know Christ and to make Him known.

Are you allowing God to change you to make you worthy of His calling? Think of it this way. Imagine you knew the Queen of England was coming to spend the night in your house in three months. You would probably take one of your bedrooms and totally renovate it to make it suitable for royalty. You'd make it worthy of the Queen. Now she didn't choose the room because it's beautiful, you made the room beautiful because it suits her majesty.

God didn't choose you because your heart was beautiful. In fact, He chose you when your heart was still stained with sin. He didn't choose you because you deserved it. But now, He is renovating your life to make you worthy of His majestic presence in your heart.

## II. GOD WANTS TO EMPOWER ME TO BE FRUITFUL

Next Paul prayed, "By his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness." People are obsessed with power. I heard about a guy who bought a new Corvette. He took a friend for a ride to show off how much power it had. He pulled up to a red light and taped a \$100 bill on the dashboard on the passenger side. He told his friend that if he could grab the \$100 within five seconds of taking off, he could have it. When the light turned green he stomped the gas and the passenger was pinned so deep in his seat that he couldn't lean up to grab the \$100 bill. That's a powerful car. But I don't suggest you try that.

Or consider the power of a Boeing 747. My friend, Toby Cline, is a first officer for Cathay Pacific. He flies the new Boeing 747-8 that can take off weighing almost one million pounds. He writes a blog and here's how he describes his first takeoff in this new model: "Huge and heavy, this machine of precision and power is easy to guide onto the runway. The clearance comes in over our headsets: 'Cleared for takeoff.' The engine indications are all normal and the weight indicator shows that we are right at max takeoff weight: 985,000 pounds—that's almost 500 tons. With everything on the level, it is time to ride this rocket into the sky. I call for takeoff thrust and the captain 'stands up' the thrust levers and then pushes the auto thrust switch to engage full power. The enormous and powerful, yet eerily quiet the four GE engines slowly come to life before calmly producing nearly 67,000 lbs. of thrust each at max power. This mighty beast we sit atop charges down the runway for takeoff with the ease of a Sunday afternoon stroll, even when it is fully laden with cargo. Roughly ten seconds later, the captain calls 'Rotate' and I guide the control column back into my lap as the nose starts to rise. We lift off the runway at a V2 speed of 180 knots as the lights of Hong Kong International blur past us in a hurry. Gliding gracefully through the moonless dark air, we climb out at 350 knots all the way to our cruise altitude of 31,000 feet." That's a powerful jet.

Then, there's the power of the President of the United States. He is the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful military force in the history of the world. That's another kind of power. But of all the power in the Universe, there is none that can compare with the power of God. In 1 Chronicles 29:11 King David prayed, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O

Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.” (1 Chronicles 29:11-12)

Nothing can compare with the power of God. He alone has the power to speak the Universe into existence. He alone has the power to make a superhighway in the middle of the Red Sea. He alone has the power to knock down the walls of Jericho. He alone has the power to help a teenager kill a giant. He alone has the power to change water into wine, heal a leper, and make a blind man see. He alone has the power to raise Jesus from the dead. He alone has the power to change a sinner into a saint. Nothing can compare to His mighty power.

But God doesn't give us His power for nothing. He empowers us to live the Christian life. Jesus said to His disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

And Paul's specific prayer was that God's power would bring to fruition, every desire for good works. God wants to give you His power so you can display the fruit of the Spirit. Last year when we were studying Galatians we learned that the fruit is, “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

If you want to demonstrate those nine personality traits, you have two choices. You can memorize them and every day say, “I'm going to work as hard as I can to be loving, joyful, peaceful and patient. I'm going to be kind and good, even if it kills me!” That's a recipe for disaster and frustration. Here's a better way. Jesus lives inside you in the person of the Holy Spirit. Those nine expressions of fruit describe His personality. So, you have the option of surrendering control of your life to Jesus to allow Him to love people through you. You can allow Him to express His joy, peace, and patience through you.”

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:5, 8)

Have you discovered that you don't have enough personal power to live the Christian life? It's the truth we learn in that song we sing as children, “Jesus loves me; this I know. For the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong; They are weak, but He is strong.” But then we grow up and we think we are strong enough. But for all of our lives, we must say, “I am weak, but God you are strong. So give me your strength.”

### **III. GOD WANTS TO GLORIFY THE NAME OF JESUS IN ME**

Paul ended his prayer by writing, “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.” Paul concluded this prayer with a reference to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In his letters, Paul circles through a lot of different doctrines, but he always comes back to grace. It's all about grace. Let's notice three dynamics of grace.

## **A. Grace immediately sets you free from guilt**

Let me share with you again what my definition for grace. Grace is God giving us what we need, not what we deserve. We deserve punishment, but we need forgiveness—that's grace. We deserve hell, but we need heaven—that's grace. We deserve death, but we need life—that's grace. The twin sister of grace is mercy. Mercy is God withholding the punishment we deserve.

I heard about a lady who had some portraits taken by a photographer. She wasn't very pretty, but she imagined she was. When she got the proofs, she didn't like any of them and she complained to the photographer. "These pictures don't do me justice." He looked at the pictures and looked at her and said, "Ma'am, you don't need justice, you need mercy!" We all need grace and mercy instead of justice.

The lead singer for U2, Bono, has testified about the life-changing power of God's grace. In fact, he wrote a song named "Grace." The lyrics say: Grace, Grace, she takes the blame; She covers the shame; Removes the stain; It could be her name; Grace...It's a name for a girl; It's also a thought that, changed the world."

Bono dabbled with a lot of different religions, but it was the grace of God that blew Him away. He was interviewed once and he spoke about the power of grace over karma. He said, "The universe operates by Karma, we all know that. For every action there's an equal and opposite reaction. Then enters Grace and turns that upside down. I love it. Christ's ministry really was a lot to do with pointing out how everybody is a screw-up in some shape or form, there's no way around it. But then He was to say, well, I am going to deal with those sins for you. I will take on Myself all the consequences of sin. Even if you're not religious, I think you'd accept that there are consequences to all the mistakes we make. And so Grace enters the picture to say, I'll take the blame, I'll carry the cross. It is a powerful idea. Grace interrupting Karma."

My karma and your karma say that because we have sinned, we deserve to be punished. But grace sets us free from our guilt.

## **B. Grace continually causes you to reflect God's glory**

This gets to the heart of Paul's prayer. He prayed that the name of the Lord Jesus would be glorified in our lives. The word glory (*doxa*) literally means, "shining." Think of glory as meaning, "to shine the spotlight on." When we give God glory, we shine the spotlight on Him instead of ourselves.

The Bible describes how we are to reflect the glory of Jesus. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

When Paul used the phrase "unveiled faces" he was referring to an experience from the life of Moses to illustrate this glory. When Moses was up on Mt. Sinai with the Lord, he asked to see God. God said Moses couldn't look into His face, or he would die. So God passed by and Moses

caught the afterglow of God's goodness. But that was enough to light up Moses' face with a supernatural radiance. The Bible says, "When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him...when Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face." (Exodus 34:30, 33)

Moses' glow faded with time, and from the language Paul used it appears Moses kept the veil in place long after the glow was gone. In other words, Moses wore a mask of holiness like many people do today. But the point is we don't need a veil! We are unveiled because we reflect the glory of the Lord in our lives. Wouldn't agree there are some Christians who just seem to shine with the presence of God in their lives?

I read a story about a professor at a Christian college who always finished his New Testament class with this illustration. He would reach into his back pocket and pull out his wallet. From a pocket in the wallet, he pulled out a little mirror no larger than a quarter. The edges were honed down smoothly and it sparkled. He said, "When I was a child my father gave me this mirror as a toy and I discovered it had a great power. I could use it to catch the glint of the sun and shine it into dark holes or dark corners. As I grew older, I realized this was a metaphor of my life. God has called me to be a light in this world. But I'm not the source of light; I'm simply a little mirror. But when I allow His light to shine on me, I can bring light into the darkness."

So, how do we glorify the name of Jesus? We step out of the spotlight and we continually put the spotlight on Him. We give Him all the glory and credit for anything good in our lives. We don't just glorify God in "spiritual" matters. One of the verses I memorized in college is 1 Corinthians 10:31 that says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." You can eat, drink, sleep, work, play to the glory of God. The great British Pastor, Charles Spurgeon enjoyed smoking cigars. When he first met Dwight L. Moody, who was a very portly man, Moody said, "How is it that you, a Man of God, can smoke cigars?" Spurgeon said, "I don't just smoke cigars. I smoke cigars to the glory of God. But tell me, how is it that a man of God, like you, can be so fat?" Moody patted his belly and said, "And I eat to the glory of God!" After that, they got along as good friends.

### **C. Grace eventually transforms you to be like Jesus**

God has a purpose for your life. Have you discovered it? Most of you know I like to play golf. Golf didn't really take off in the U.S. until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is a story that golf was first introduced to the U.S. when a Scotsman visited President Ulysses S. Grant. This Scotsman wasn't very good, but he teed up a golf ball on the White House lawn. He took a mighty swing and the ball and missed, tearing up the grass, and scattering dirt in the President's face and beard. He took another mighty swing and missed. He flailed away four more times without making contact with the ball. Finally the Scotsman paused to catch his breath. President Grant said, "There seems to be a fair amount of exercise in this game, but I fail to see the purpose of the ball."

That reminds me there are multitudes of people swinging away aimlessly at life with no real meaning or purpose. They go from one activity to another searching for meaning. They buy the

latest gadgets or smartphones hoping fancier toys will satisfy the inner itch for purpose and meaning.

The Bible reveals God's purpose for our lives in 2 Corinthians 3:18 where it says we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. That means God wants to continually transform us to be more and more like Jesus in our personality and character.

## CONCLUSION

So what does God want with us? He wants to make us worthy of His calling. He wants to empower us to bear His fruit. He wants to glorify the name of Jesus in our lives. Many people believe that this life is all there is, so their goal is to live it up, because they think they'll only have about 70 to 80 years to stuff in as much fun as possible. But this life isn't all there is.

Randy Alcorn has a neat way of thinking about our life in light of eternity. Think of it this way: Take a sheet of paper and on the left side of the paper draw a small dot. Then draw a long line from the dot toward the right and put an arrow on the right end of the line. The dot represents your life. The line represents eternity. Compared to eternity, the seventy or eighty years that you live here is only a nanosecond compared to eternity. James says our life is but a vapor that appears for a moment and vanishes. One of these fall mornings when the temperature drops, you're going to walk outside and when you breathe, you'll see a vapor cloud. Watch how fast it disappears: That's the length of your life according to the Bible.

So all the accomplishments and thrills you accumulate fit in this tiny dot. And all the pain and suffering you'll ever experience is confined to that tiny little dot. So what can we learn? We need to have an eternal perspective; we need to live for the line, not for the dot.

But so many of us devote 90% of our time, energy, and resources living for the dot. We're so concerned about what kind of house we have in the dot, what kind of car we drive in the dot, and how much money we can accumulate inside this tiny dot.

It's easier to live for the dot, because that is what we see with our eyes. But you have to have eyes of faith to live for the line. Are you living for the dot or for the line?

## OUTLINE

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### II. EMPOWER ME TO BE FRUITFUL

*"By his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness."*

Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." *John 15:5, 8*

### III. GLORIFY THE NAME OF JESUS IN ME

*"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."*

A. Grace immediately sets you free from guilt

B. Grace continually causes you to reflect God's glory

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." *2 Corinthians 3:17-18*

C. Grace eventually transforms you to be like Jesus

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes