

Prayer Ministry 1

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER MINISTRY

WHO NEEDS PRAYER MINISTRY?

John 20:3-7 "Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen."

Jesus took no baggage or sin of His own to the grave; the only sin and baggage He took was ours. When He rose from the dead, all that was dealt with as the folded grave clothes show.

John 11:43-44 "When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'"

When Lazarus came out of the tomb, it wasn't a dead man walking – he was alive, restored to life by Jesus. However, he was carrying all the baggage that he'd taken into the tomb, and the smell of death was still on him. His friends had to help him get free of it.

It doesn't really matter how or when we come to our Christian walk, we will have accumulated baggage upon the way. There will be hurts and disappointments, rejection, shock and trauma – physical and emotional, loss and grief, anger and perhaps abuse – and this isn't an exhaustive list of possibilities. Even after we come to know Christ, we will continue to gather rubbish and stains along the way. Many will say "It's all dealt with at the cross", and that's true – it is. But we have to apply that completed work of the cross to our lives. Sometimes this means digging deeper than what can be seen on the surface. Everyone needs ministry – not one of us is perfect, not one of us is completely free of baggage and not one of us is protected from picking up further baggage along the way.

IS PRAYER MINISTRY JUST FOR BELIEVERS?

Many of the aspects of prayer ministry are applicable to non-Christians as well as Christians. However, there are some areas – for example, forgiveness and repentance – where a non-Christian might struggle. Deliverance is an area which would be a real issue for a non-Christian – as the Bible shows us, if a demon is ejected from a non-believer, he can return and bring others with him:

Matthew 12:43-45 *“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.”.*

The Ellel guideline is that, if you suspect someone is not a follower of Jesus, you either give them the opportunity of surrendering their life to the Lord or you refer them for ministry along those lines.

WHAT DOES GOD THINK OF THIS?

THE HEART OF GOD TO HEAL

Exodus 15:26 *‘He said, “If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you [Jehovah Rapha]”’*

Rapha (râpâ) means "to restore", "to heal" or "to make healthful" in Hebrew

Luke 9:11 *‘He [Jesus] welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing’*

Acts 10:38 *‘how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.’*

FOUR PILLARS OF THE FULL GOSPEL

Luke 4:18-19 *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”*

OUR COMMISSION TO HEAL

Matthew 10:7-8: *“As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”*

Luke 9:1-2 *‘When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick’*

Acts 1:8 *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”*

GOD’S PLAN AND (A) MAN’S MISTAKE

STARTING POINT

It all starts in Genesis.

We often tell new Christians to leave the Old Testament for a while because it can be difficult reading, and leave Revelation because it takes a bit of understanding (i.e. we don’t understand it!) and concentrate on the four gospels and Acts. This is a bit like giving them a thrilling detective novel and telling them to start at chapter 3 and leave out the last chapter or two. Genesis – especially the first few chapters – are fundamental to what this is all about and if you don’t understand the problem, you can’t understand God’s solution.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

There are three main schools of thought about how the earth, mankind and the animals came into being: Evolution, Intelligent Design and Creation. Evolution and Intelligent Design sort of rub along together. Creation stands alone. The reason why is that only Creation requires God to take a hand in creating man. If man wasn’t created by God in His image and likeness, then there was no fall. If there was no fall, the death and resurrection of Jesus was, at best, pointless and at worst, a fable. If there was no fall and the death and resurrection of Jesus was pointless, then what we have now is as good as it gets, and at the end of this life it’s either oblivion or you get to come back as a chicken, and that’s exactly what the enemy wants you to think.

I believe the book of Genesis is historical fact and is in no sense allegorical. God created the heavens and the earth in 6 days of 24 hours, and each day was as long as the days that we know today. Equally, I believe that the account of the creation of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace is a factual record of events.

CREATION

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created night and day, the seas and the land. He made the land produce vegetation and He created the sun and moon. He filled the seas and the air with living creatures. He populated the land with animals. And He saw what He had made was good.

Then He created mankind – male and female - in His image and in His likeness, and told them to fill the earth and subdue it. And He saw it was very good.

When we look more closely at the story of Adam and Eve, we see that God made Adam first, from the dust of the ground and from His breath. He gave Adam free run of the Garden, except He said Adam should not eat the fruit of one tree.

God decided Adam needed a helper and there was none suitable to be found. God took a rib from Adam who was then no longer the image and likeness of God because there was a bit missing. God created Eve from the rib, so together Adam and Eve comprised the image and likeness of God. Gen 2:24 *“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh”*.

Eve was not created to be Adam’s servant – she was created to be his helper and complement him. However, in every partnership, someone has to have the casting vote and that was Adam. And with the casting vote, Adam also carried the responsibility if he got it wrong.

THE FALL

Eve was deceived by the devil. The Bible describes him as ‘the serpent’, but he was a glorious being. The Bible doesn’t say whether Eve was told by God directly that she should not eat of the forbidden fruit, or whether Adam told her. However, Eve elaborated on what God had said (*“You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”*). The devil, always a legalist, used this to cause her to question, and in questioning, a seed of doubt was sown.

Many years ago, I heard a speaker who suggested that, when God told Adam that he would die if he ate the forbidden fruit, the word for ‘die’ meant a spiritual death. When Eve repeated this to Satan, the word she used meant physical death, and that’s the leverage that Satan used. However, I haven’t been able to confirm this myself.

Anyway, Eve ate the fruit. Note that Adam was with Eve at the time, (Gen 3:6 *‘She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.’*) and he did not defend or correct her.

Up to this time, Eve and Adam were fully spiritually alive and in tune with one another and with God – there was no sin in the world to obstruct their intimacy. The instant Eve

bit into the fruit, Adam knew that his spiritual union with Eve was broken. He knew straight away that something had changed and he knew he had to make a choice. He chose to follow his wife instead of following God, and idolatry entered the world. Adam handed over to Satan the authority God had given him.

Adam and Eve realised they were naked, and they tried to cover themselves. In trying to do for themselves what God had intended that He should do for them, religion entered the world.

Then God came to them and they hid. When God questioned them, Adam blamed Eve and his disobedience and his surrender of his God-given authority was complete.

Over the next generation or two, mankind acquired the sins of pride, envy, jealousy and finally murder. As time passed, mankind fell further and further into evil ways until it came to a point where God could no longer tolerate it. He sent the flood to destroy mankind, saving only Noah and his family. However, this wasn't enough, and mankind fell again into sin in many ways – and that continues to this day.

GOD'S ANSWER

God was not content to allow His creation to perish. His plan always was for God and man to share an intimate union. He had a plan to restore what the devil had destroyed. His plan was audacious and costly – His plan was that God the Son would suffer and pay the penalty for the wrongdoing of mankind – and a man - so that man could be reconciled to God. We all know the story of Jesus, His birth to a virgin, His sinless life and His unjustified death. We read the story of His resurrection and His ascension. If we read far enough, we also read the outcome – Jesus wins!

But there's a bit missing. The bit that's missing is that we still have to choose. God's plan of salvation is that He has provided everything that's necessary for us to be reconciled to Him, to know His forgiveness and have confidence in abundant life now and an eternity in glory with our Creator. But by God's mercy and grace, we have been given the opportunity to make a choice. He hasn't forced it upon us and it's not a foregone conclusion. As Adam had to choose between his wife and God – and got it wrong - we have to choose between the dominion of Satan and the Lordship of Jesus.

LORDSHIP PRAYER

I first met this prayer on the MicroNETS course. We were invited to stand if we wanted to say this prayer. I was a little surprised at the alacrity with which most of my course mates leapt to their feet. If you read this little prayer, I hope you'll find – as I felt – that it's a big deal. I would suggest that we need to take time to read this prayer and reflect on what we're actually promising Jesus. After all, if Jesus is not Lord of all, He's not Lord at all!

Shall we pray together?

<Lordship Prayer as per bookmark>

If you have said this prayer today, then I would like you to take this bookmark and add it to your spiritual armoury. We tend to hand things over to the Lord and then gradually take them back again, so it's good to have this prayer on hand and to revisit it regularly. If you didn't feel you could say this prayer, then I would encourage you to discuss it with Pastor Rob.