

Speaker's Notes for Prayer Engages the Triune God

Two notes up-front:

First, please see that all Scripture quoted herein is from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* – unless otherwise indicated.

Second, do note that I had difficulty organizing my outline format in a way that would look good on paper while also being recognized by my word processor. Accordingly, lettering, numbering, and indentation were wildly inconsistent and, at times, improper. While I made a cursory effort to clean all this up, you may still find some, ah, *quirks*.

God bless!

-LM

I. **Introduction:**

A lengthy introduction will be necessary to our topic this morning, (and later on, I'll have an important Leon Morris quote on that word: *introduction*) because the topic of prayer has to do with approaching the glorious presence of the Lord – who is a consuming Fire. This is something we dare not take lightly, so in considering how our prayers engage the Triune God, let us begin by considering as our first main point how *the Triune God first engages us*.

II. **First and Foremost, The Triune God Engages Us**

A. The Problem

a. On the one hand, God's glory and holiness are *unapproachable*

i. 1 Timothy 6:15-16

He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of Lords, the only One who has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; no one has seen or can see Him; to Him be honor and eternal might. Amen.

ii. Hebrews 12:18-23

For you have not come to what could be touched, to a blazing fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm, to the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words. (Those who heard it begged that not another word be spoken to them, for they could not bear what was commanded: And if even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned! The appearance was so terrifying that Moses said, I am terrified and trembling.) Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem), to myriads of angels in festive gathering, to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven, to God who is the Judge of all, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, to Jesus (Mediator of a new covenant), and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

- b. But at the same time, He is most often present in much less noticeable ways:
 - i. Genesis 28:16
When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."
 - ii. Piecing together Revelation 1:12,13,20, and 2:1 shows us that Christ "walks among" His churches, including:
 - 1. One that He called "dead" (Sardis, 3:1)
 - 2. And Laodicea, which may not have had any true believers at all (3:14ff)
- c. The Triune God is always present, watching and judging. John 8:50: *"I do not seek My glory; the One who seeks it also judges."* There will be a day when He issues His final judgement. And in that day, the Triune God will pour out *Triune wrath*.
 - i. Revelation 4:5
"Flashes of lightning and rumblings of thunder came from the throne. Seven fiery torches were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God."
 - 1. Who is on the throne?
God and Christ (Revelation 3:21: *"The victor: I will give him the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I also won the victory and sat down with My Father on His throne."*)
 - 2. What is meant by fiery torches?
Torches in the Bible are often associated with *war* and *sieges*. The ("Sevenfold") Spirit of God is burning with divine wrath and lighting the way for divine judgement.
 - ii. Revelation 6 speaks of terrifying signs of judgement striking the Earth; they are so severe that, in vv. 15-17, "the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"
- d. The Lord's Prayer as Law and Gospel: Praying this prayer will *expose* you.
 - 1. Consider each clause, especially...
 - 2. ...this one: Matthew 6:12, which can be rendered like this:
And forgive us our debts in the same way as we ourselves have also forgiven our debtors.
 - 3. Would we want our verdict on Judgement Day to be *exactly the one we have rendered* to our debtors?
 - 4. We clearly have no right to God's forgiveness!
 - 5. If not for Christ, we have *no hope at all*.

B. God's Solution

- a. Let's re-consider the Lord's Prayer in light of the life He lived on Earth.
 - i. Consider how He expresses every right and good intention, all pleasing to His Father.
 - ii. Consider how He fulfills every one also!
- b. Christ's righteous life and atoning death makes it possible for God to forgive us unforgiveable people – declaring us just while still *being* just.
 - i. Romans 3:25-26
God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.

God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

ii. 2 Corinthians 5:21

He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

C. Our position now, in Christ:

a. Christ, God's propitiation, also became our mediator.

i. Christ became our Way to the Father. John 14:1-7:

"Your heart must not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going."

"Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where You're going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

"If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."

ii. More than that, He is now our Intercessor before the Father. Hebrews 7:26ff:
For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do – first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever. (Hebrews 7:26ff)

b. More than that, we now have union with Christ.

i. John 15:19-21

"In a little while the world will see Me no longer, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live too. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, you are in Me, and I am in you. The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him."

ii. Ephesians 1:3-6 tells us that God the Father "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved."

iii. We are legally reckoned to be in a joint union with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself our way to the Father!

In Him, the Triune wrath of a Holy God gives way to Triune favor.

III. Prayer Engages the Triune God

- a. Prayer is much bigger than us and our thoughts! It is one outworking of the Triune God's eternal plan to glorify Himself by lavishing His mercy on us.
- b. Prayer is ultimately wrought within us...
 - i. ...from God...
 - ii. ...through God...
 - iii. ...to God
- c. More specifically:
 - i. **The Holy Spirit aids us in prayer**

1. Indeed, our desire to pray is prompted by the Holy Spirit in the first place:
 - a. "For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose." (Philippians 2:13, HCSB)
 - b. We must recognize that every inclination we have toward God is His gift to us as He works through us

2. Biblical prayers are directed by the Holy Spirit

- a. 1 Corinthians 2:6ff

However, we do speak a wisdom among the mature, but not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. On the contrary, we speak God's hidden wisdom in a mystery, a wisdom God predestined before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age knew this wisdom, for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind – God prepared this for those who love Him.

Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. But the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. For who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

3. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us as we pray

- a. Romans 8:26-27

In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mind-set, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

ii. Christ, our Great High Priest, aids us in prayer

1. Christ died and rose to bring us to His Father

a. Romans 5:1-2 (NASB)

[H]aving been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand[...]

b. Note the word “introduction” there. On page 219 of his Pillar New Testament Commentary on Romans, Leon Morris remarks: *Through Christ we approach God. Most translations speak of our having access, but the noun seems rather to mean “introduction”. “The idea is that of introduction to the presence-chamber of the monarch. The rendering ‘access’ is inadequate since it leaves out of sight the fact that we do not come in our own strength but need an ‘introducer’—Christ”. The stress is on Christ’s activity, not ours.**

2. Christ sent the Spirit to aid us

a. John 14:16-17

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn’t see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.

b. John 16:7

Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you.

3. Christ Himself intercedes for us as we pray

a. Romans 8:34

*Who is the one who condemns?
Christ Jesus is the One who died,
but even more, has been raised;
He also is at the right hand of God
and intercedes for us.*

b. Hebrews 7:23-25 tells us that – unlike earthly, Levitical priests, who die – “because [Jesus] remains forever, He holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore, He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.”

c. Christ, having shed His blood in our place, now pleads the merit of His blood to cleanse us as we come before the Father in prayer!

* Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans [Pillar New Testament Commentary]* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988). Internal citations omitted.

iii. God, our adoptive Father, listens with favor

1. The Father hears the prayers of the Spirit
2. The Father hears the prayers of the Son
3. The Father now hears the prayers we offer in union with Christ

- a. The very fact that we offer prayers...

- i. ...is evidence that we are His

Romans 8:14-17

All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

- ii. ...is evidence that He hears us with favor

1 John 5:14-15

Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.

- b. He does not compromise His righteousness to hear us – because He has placed us in union with Christ, and because of the merit of Christ, He hears our prayers (as perfected through Christ) as He hears those of Christ Himself!

John 16:26-27

In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

IV. Conclusion: This was God's plan all along!

- a. It's all to show off how rich He is:

- i. Ephesians 2:6-7

Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- ii. Romans 9:23 tells us that God desires "to make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy that He prepared beforehand for glory".

- b. Let us come to Him at all times, asking for His blessing so as to further glorify Him!

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB)

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.