

Connecting the Dots ... Post Resurrection Issues

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Date: 01 May 2022

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[0 : 00] And in it, we will be dealing with those events that transpired shortly after the resurrection of Christ, right on up until what we view as the beginning of the church, which is the body of Christ.

So there are lots of really significant things that we will be undertaking. And in a way, I almost feel apologetic for Grace People because for you, this is pretty much going to be remedial.

It is going to be material with which you are already familiar. And if that's the case, then the question might be asked, well, then why am I bothering to bring it?

And the answer is simple. Because I will be experiencing my 87th birthday in July, I am not going to be with you all that much longer for one reason or another.

So my goal, my objective is to try and solidify in your hearts and minds those truths that we have come to love and appreciate so much over the last 50 years.

[1 : 09] And I'm going to emphasize them. And I'm going to renew them. And I'm going to re-speak them. And I'm going to remind you of them. And I do so on the basis of the authority of Scripture itself because it was the Apostle Peter that said, I want to remind you of these things even though you already know them.

I want to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. So that's going to be my goal for the next however long it takes. And we began this series with the subject of prayer.

And one of the reasons I did is because I personally have experienced such an enormous, I guess you would call it a breakthrough or an enlightening regarding the subject of prayer.

As a result of coming to grips with some new understanding of Scripture, like Nathan was talking about at the 9 o'clock hour this morning, in understanding the Bible.

And I already exposed some of that in our last session together when I talked about my experiences as a young Christian in prayer and how I found it so confusing and so sometimes disappointing and perplexing that it led me into all kinds of misunderstanding.

[2 : 30] And yet when I came to appreciate what we refer to here as the right division of Scripture or putting things in their proper place where God put them instead of mixing them, keeping them separate like they're supposed to be, and understanding and appreciating all of it, but understanding that it is not all to just be jumbled together and then try to make sense of.

And that's what I was doing as a young Christian. And I know many of you can identify with that as well. But once you experience the distinction and the enlightenment that is available in the right division of Scripture, it's, well, it's not like getting saved all over again, but it's pretty close.

It's pretty close. And it does make a big difference. So we're talking about this one called Prayer.

And it just so happens that for April 30, in your bulletin, from two minutes in the Bible, there is an issue that just blends in beautifully with what I'm talking about.

And it's called True Prayer. And I'm going to read it. I want you to follow along because it will give you some perspective of what we're talking about. This is the April 30 issue.

And the one on the other side is good, too. It's called I Wasn't Praying Right. We'll talk about that one later. But let us suppose that I have just had the joy of leading a soul to Christ.

[4 : 12] He was a godless, wicked creature until lately. But now, suddenly, a great transformation has taken place in his life.

He is overwhelmed with the joy of sins forgiven. Nevertheless, a few things still trouble him. As he stands there, touched by the love of Christ, he says, I don't look very much like a Christian.

Look at my clothes. And I ought to get a job and work like other people do. And then, too, I've been a wicked blasphemer. Swearing seems to be part of my nature.

I don't know how I'll ever stop it. That was a problem that yours truly had, too. After spending three years in an army barracks, I could swear for 15 minutes without repeating myself.

And I had to clean up my potty mouth, you know, but I just somehow knew that that wasn't pleasing to the Lord. Continuing on. I suggest that we pray about it.

[5 : 17] But this dear man, he says he has never prayed in his life, and he doesn't know how. So I teach him. I tell him how simple prayer is, that he should simply talk to God and say, Lord, I need a decent suit of clothes and a job.

And oh, please help me to stop swearing. I ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus. We rise from prayer and feeling for the man, and I myself get him a suit of clothes and a job.

And he goes on his way rejoicing. Now, let us suppose that I return 10 years later to find that he is happily married, has three children, and is living a consistent Christian life.

Calling at his home, however, I find that one of his children is seriously ill. We get on our knees to pray for the child, and he begins, Lord, I need a decent suit of clothes and a job.

And oh, please help me to stop swearing. Ridiculous, you say. No man would be so foolish. Yes, ridiculous indeed. Yet, so many people simply repeat prayers in the same way.

[6 : 41] The so-called Lord's Prayer is, of course, a perfect prayer. But it is significant that in giving this very prayer, our Lord cautioned his disciples.

When you pray, Jesus said, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do. Be not like unto them.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye. And by the way, after this manner doesn't mean in these exact words. Matthew 6, verses 7 through 9.

Yet, this very prayer is repeated word for word at funerals and weddings, in storms at sea, meals, and at church services on practically any occasion, whether it applies or not.

Thank God for those who know God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and can truly enter into his presence in prayer, to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in time of need.

[7 : 51] So, that needs to be taken to heart, and needs to be acted upon as we engage in prayer.

And speaking of that subject, I want you to turn, if you would please, to Romans chapter 8, and we will see a stellar verse of scripture that is just so enlightening, so comforting, it's just, just amazing.

And it is coming, it is coming from the pen of one who really ought to know, because he's experienced it by way of personal experience. And we're going to begin for time's sake, because the subject is, is one that deserves our attention.

Due to the fact of its practicality, and the situation being such that, it is an ongoing need that we all have. Because as I've said before, every time you go to the Lord in prayer, you're always acknowledging two things.

One is your weakness, and inability to deal with the situation that you're praying for. Because if you were able to do it, you would do it, because we are under obligation to do what we can.

[9 : 06] What is within our realm of possibility and responsibility. And then secondly, we are also revealing our ignorance, because there is so very much that we don't know.

And even the things we think we do know, we often don't have correct. And when the apostle, someone with his stature, his insight, his connections, makes a statement like this, we ought to sit up and take notice.

And I am talking about, well, let's just begin with verse 23. Not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, grown within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Now, just let me inject something here. What he's saying is, I am not a finished product. That's what he's saying. We are waiting for the completion of what God has begun.

And what God has begun, and that work that he has begun in you, is the regeneration of your internal, immaterial human spirit.

[10 : 25] That's what made you alive in Christ on the inside. That is that which he has already done. That is the good work that he has performed in us.

He will complete, but it isn't complete yet. The guarantee that it will be completed is what he has begun, and he will conclude it.

And that will be the redemption of our body. When your body is provided with the same caliber of being as your spirit.

Your spirit in Christ is perfect. It is the work of God. Your body is still lacking.

We need several aspects of this body to drop off and several new things to be added so that our body will be like the resurrection body of Jesus Christ, no longer subject to death, disease, aches, pains, and all the rest of it.

[11 : 27] This is what Paul is talking about when he says, the redemption of our body. Spirit's already been redeemed. The body has not. And by the way, that's why we still die, even as believers.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope. For what does one hope for? For what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. And in the same way, the spirit, this is the Holy Spirit that bears witness with our spirit. The spirit also helps our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we should. That reveals our ignorance. Is there anybody here who doesn't think that you know what you need? Don't we all tend to think we know what we need? You have no idea how wrong you are.

[12 : 42] We all know what we want. No problem with that. But what we need is another matter. Let's put it this way.

Let's think in terms of a child and parent relationship. With that, so many of you can identify. Does your three or four-year-old child know what they need?

Nope. Do they know what they want? Boy, they sure do. Well, the distance that separates parent from child does not begin to compare with the distance that separates a human being from the creator.

God really does know what we need. And you know what? He loves you so much, just like a parent to a child, he will not give you what you want.

Most of the time. Sometimes he does. But most of the time, like a parent to a child, the child doesn't know what they really need.

[13 : 48] They only know what they want. And a loving parent will provide what the child needs even though they don't want it. Like your vegetables and things like that.

You know? Because mama knows best. A child doesn't. But is there a child anywhere that doesn't think they do know best?

Well, of course. That's part of being a human being. I am so smart, I know exactly what I need and when I need it, all the way through. And do you know what that is of speaking?

It's human arrogance that's speaking. We'll get a lot further along in life if we recognize and come to grips with the fact that we really don't know very much at all.

Not nearly as much as we think we do. And when the Apostle Paul here says, we do not know how to pray as we should.

[14 : 56] This is the same guy over in 2 Corinthians 10, I believe it is, that said he besought the Lord for the removal of that thorn in the flesh, whatever it was, it was an impediment of some kind.

And if there's anything that God is going to do, for sure, it's going to remove any kind of an impediment that would impede the progress of the gospel. And Paul is saying, if I were just rid of this thorn in the flesh, whether it was his eye problems or whatever it might have been, it would be so much better and I could do so much more.

And all he's doing is using the ordinary human wisdom to rationalize this thing out. And he's saying, now God, be reasonable, agree with me, this is what I need, right?

And God says, sorry, Paul, but I know what you really need. You need my grace, which will be sufficient for you to bear up under this and I'm not going to take away the thorn in the flesh.

You don't love me! And we tend to have our little pity party right there. I remember what tremendous insight I got, not that I've got it all because I've got enough insight to know I don't have much insight.

[16 : 16] But I read a little booklet that was written by Paul Little. He was the director of InterVarsity Press at the time.

And I picked that up. I think I saw it in a Christian bookstore and I picked it up and I thought, well, this looks interesting. And I just bought it just because of the title.

And the title was Affirming the Will of God. Didn't take time to read it then and put it with some other things that I was getting and eventually when I got home, I got around to it and opened it up and boy, oh boy, what an eye opener.

Affirming the will of God. And you know what? It kind of hurt.

One reason it hurt was because I guess I discovered maybe for the first time how wrong I had been about this subject of prayer. And it ties in with this Romans thing and Romans 8.28 and we know that all things, listen, to say that God works all things together for a good is not just a Christian cliché.

[17 : 37] It's not just something to put on a plaque and hang on the wall. It's real truth. It really is so.

And no, it isn't most things. It's God works all things together for good. You mean to tell me the stuff that really hurts?

Why must we hurt anyway? Listen, let's use the parent-child again.

This is just a picture of another analogy that doesn't always work and doesn't always hold true in both cases. But if you as a parent see your child in pain, there's only one thing you want to do. Just one thing. Let's resolve that pain. Get rid of that pain. Get them out of that pain. Why? Well, because you love them. You're not going to stand there and grin and say, yeah, yeah, suck it up, kid.

[18 : 52] No. You're going to do what you can to relieve the pain. So why doesn't God do that when he sees us in pain?

Why doesn't God come to our rescue? He's supposed to be the know-it-all and do-it-all and all the power and all the wisdom and all the rest.

Why does he sometimes seem to be so stingy with it? affirming the will of God.

Does that include lying alongside your mate of almost 50 years sharing a hospital bed with her in an emergency ward?

When she's breathing with the assistance of this machine and your family's all seated around the bed, hard for some of them to stay awake because it's 3 o'clock in the morning and this has been going on for hours and you know that her breathing isn't as rapid as it was an hour ago.

[20 : 41] it's becoming less and less and the writing's on the wall. and the nurse comes in and says would you like for everybody to be able to say their goodbyes now before we disconnect the machine?

so we all left the room but just stood outside one by one our son and daughter and best friends who were with us Barbara and Daryl Henderson 3.30 and Sunday morning and last of all of course I went in and had my words with her and likelihood is that she couldn't hear anything that anybody had said because of the massive brain bleed cerebral hemorrhage is what we're talking about came about with no warning no symptoms just like that and there was no way in the world that I could bring myself to ask God for a miracle well what's the matter didn't I believe that God could perform miracles that he could just raise her up if he wanted to and she could walk out of that room was God capable of doing that of course he is but was that

God's plan no not very likely usually when the doctors tell you that you've got maybe three or four months you probably ought to set your house in order usually when they tell you that they're right they don't miss it very often so where is this preacher guy can't he pump up his faith enough to let God be you know after all I've been preaching his word and I've been praying and I've been counseling people is it too much to ask for a little miracle right now be a big miracle to me but it would be just a little miracle for God and wouldn't he probably wouldn't even miss it you know he does so many things like that couldn't even think about praying that way you know all I could think about is how incredibly profoundly thankful

I was for the 49 years and 3 months and I think 4 days that God gave me with that incredible woman and one of the things that really helped me come to that conclusion was that little booklet by Paul Little it was called Affirming the Will of God and affirming the Will of God is radically different from resigning yourself to the will of God because I was good at that when you resign yourself to the will of God you say okay God if that's the way it has to be and that's the way it has to be I accept it I resign myself to it but I want you to know this if I could change it I would right now you resign yourself to the will of

God because you've come to grips with the fact that you can't change it so what else can you do but accept it but lurking beneath the surface is the realization yeah but I want you to know this if I could change it I would change it in a heartbeat right now you know what that is speaking that is supreme human ignorance and arrogance speaking and the difference between arrogance and ignorance is that arrogance is ignorance on steroids and we're all capable of being that way because we like to think we know what is best and we would if we could let's face it now let's be honest we would if we could super impose our will upon his will so we would get what we want it's just part of our humanity we think we're so smart and we think we're so in charge and all the rest of it but we're not but when you affirm the will of God doesn't mean you're rejoicing in it but it means you have a kind of confidence that the almighty is really on your side no matter how it looks the other way and he really

does know what he's doing and know he is not ignorant or overlooking your little part of the world he knows full well and affirming the will of God simply says father this is certainly not what [26 : 34] I would choose but I cannot deny that this is something you have allowed to come to this point which you could have easily prevented had you chosen to do so but you didn't and I don't know why but I have complete confidence that you have your reasons and you really do know what's best no matter how much it hurts that is affirming the will of God and nobody's saying it's easy it's just accepting affirming actually even going so far as preferring think of that preferring God's will over your own will and wishes and preferences can you do that nobody's saying it's easy but it's affirming the will of God and there's absolutely nothing in the world like it is just acknowledging and telling your heavenly father you know what

I really do believe that you know what's best for me and I really do believe that you know what's best for my wife Barbara and your timing is never five seconds later five seconds early and all I can say is in the midst of the grief and the sorrow there was an inexpressible kind of peace that just came over me and I can't explain it and in the midst of my tears there was a calm confident rejoicing even in adversity well this is where the rubber meets the road folks and how far cry is this from praying in connection with the kingdom and Jesus talking to the apostles and saying whatsoever you ask in my name that I will do whatsoever you ask in faith believing

I will do hey where does that where does that come in well in the first place when you try to claim something like that that Jesus said to the apostles you're reading mail that wasn't addressed to you you're reading somebody else's mail it was addressed to them for that time then don't try to appropriate that and then get angry with God because he doesn't do for you what he did for them very easy to do we just we just think we know so much and that we really do understand the whole picture and we know what's best for us when and how and all the rest of it and in case God doesn't I'll tell him and that's again just natural human arrogance speaking and we're all cursed with that that's part of the fall that's just the way we are well verse 28 and we know we don't think we don't hope we don't wish we know we know we know that God causes all things to work

I appreciate this translation so much the new American standard here because I think the old King James says and that all things work together for good but the things just don't work together for good it's God works the things together for good it's as though there is this incredible incredible what shall I call it like a universal orchestra with all of these jillions of instruments in it and all of them are playing and all of them are contributing to the whole song and God is the universal director and he stands there as it were with his baton and he brings in this now and he brings in that and he's never laid early with anything and each of those events each of those things are coming along right on cue right in connection with his timing and his wisdom and do you know what you're supposed to do about all of that just relax and enjoy my father knows exactly what's coming and he knows what I need and I'm going to trust him even though it hurts

Job said though he slay me yet will I trust him there's a passage I hadn't planned on using and it's back in the prophets in the Old Testament prophets hope I can find it now if it hasn't moved where is that yeah Habakkuk you visit Habakkuk very much most people have trouble even finding him they don't even know he's in the Bible but Habakkuk this is a beautiful thing he closes it out his little little prophecy with this it's Habakkuk chapter 3 and verse 17 well I'll start with verse 16

[32 : 44] Habakkuk said I heard and my inward parts trembled his inner parts his gut it really got to him interior really got to him at the sound my lips quivered decay enters my bones and in my place I tremble because I must wait quietly for the day of distress for the people to arise who will invade us now that's a pretty nice outlook isn't it waiting for an invasion to occur waiting to be invaded and overrun kind of wonder if there are any true believers in Ukraine who might have been praying about something like this in verse 17 though the fig tree should not blossom do you know what will happen if the fig tree doesn't blossom no figs no figs fruit and there be no fruit on the vines though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food hey this is all negative stuff is this any way for an omnipotent god to look out for the people that he says he loves can you take better care of your kids than this though the fields produce no food though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls yet this is despite the fact that the babylonians are coming and you can see the dust of their chariots off in the distance and these people have a reputation for brutality yet

I will exult in the Lord I will rejoice in the God of my salvation yet that means despite what's on the horizon the Lord God is my strength and he has made my feet like hinds feet and makes me walk

on my high places wow this is the Job mentality all over again this is the though he slay me yet will I trust him and how many times have you heard from this pulpit over the last over the last 50 years more than anything else God wants to be believed that is just that is so critical when we fail to believe him when we doubt him when we deny his word we are insulting him and we are cutting ourselves off from the bliss and the joy and the peace and the comfort that could be ours because we insist on stewing and fussing and fretting and fuming about it and why God and if that's the way you're going to be I'm not going to your old church anymore and I'm not going to read your Bible anymore and I'm just have a pity party and you know what all of that is God just looks at it and just kind of just like you would a child you know when they throw a temper tantrum and I this is her favorite story she was she must have been about two or three years old and I was a student at Cedarville at the time and we lived in an apartment upstairs on Pleasant Street and my mom and dad had come over for Thanksgiving dinner and Barbara was so excited because this was her first Thanksgiving dinner that she was going to prepare for the family and the in-laws and all that good stuff and she was getting everything ready and I was trying to help her and my mom and dad were there and and Tim it's hard to believe that Tim is in his 60s now but then he was very young and Lynette was about two or three and I don't know what it was maybe it was candy or something she wanted and Barbara wouldn't give it to her but Lynette falls down on the floor face down and starts just flailing with her hands and feet you know and just having a good old fashioned childish temper tantrum and she was just carrying on and crying because she couldn't have something you know and and Barb looked at me and looked at my mom and dad and said and we all just got up quietly and left and walked in the other room and left her there in that room flailing and carrying on and crying and all of a sudden all of a sudden she looked around and saw that the audience was gone she got up came in the room where we were fell on the floor again and started all over again and that was the talk of the day well now she outgrew that she she might have threatened to do that to Bill a few times but I don't know that she ever followed through but you know what that is I'll tell you what that is that is a perfect picture that is a perfect picture of us as adults when God doesn't give us what we want or what we know we need because we know better than he does of course because after all I'm me and if I don't know what I need who does so I do and God has just take my word for it this is what I need so you just be the celestial bell hop and when I ring you come and provide what I need and it just doesn't work that way does it and it's not supposed to and you know why because God loves you too much to give you what you want he will give you and provide for you what he knows you need and yes he knows your breaking point and you know what sometimes even your breaking point is part of the plan because lots of lives have been remade refurbished reestablished renewed only after the breaking but we fight that breaking tooth and nail we don't want anything to do with that but very often it's the breaking that makes you you know well once again

[41 : 19] I one of these times I'm going to speak and tell you what I intended to tell you but this has not been that time I'm going to consider this and by the way by no manner of means have we exhausted this subject of prayer and affirming the will of God but I've just found it so liberating and so powerful and so relaxing just relaxing your heavenly father is in charge he knows the way that I take he knows that I am but dust and just as a parent pities their child God pities us and he knows exactly what we need and when we need it and we ought to be able to just relax in that you know in the same way in the same way that a child can relax in the parent's presence because the child knows that the parent's going to provide for them going to take care of them they're going to meet their needs they're going to see to it that they don't go hungry and it works the same way it's just on a much higher plane but it works the same way and yet the whole thing is motivated by by God's love and sometimes sometimes it hurts sometimes it hurts but it's such a powerful lesson for growth and development and it just it just provides a new kind of sweetness between you and the

Lord and relaxation and comfort and I want to tell you before this coming week is out maybe even before this day is out some of you are going to ask yourself is this what Pastor Marm was talking about because it sure isn't what I want it isn't what I think I need it isn't what I've been praying for and you know it's just well I'll just quit there but I'll ask you if you have any comments or questions that you would like to share anyone I'm allowing some time for that deliberately and by the way I owe you an apology for last week I could not believe how long I'd spoken I looked at the clock I don't know I really went beyond what I what I had intended anybody have a comment or question

feel free we've got a roving microphone back there you can give David's young legs a workout anyone all right well I'll tell you this thank you anyway I'll let you go 15 minutes early if you promise not to tell anybody maybe I'm trying to make up for last week I don't know but I've tried to maintain my reputation so I tell you we we serve a wonderful God Marie thanks again for marrying me I just I love and appreciate you so much and you know it just it just thrills my heart to know how Barbara felt about you and how she would have really appreciated this match and your husband Dave was one of my best friends like a big brother to me and a real mentor and we're going to have a lot to talk about when we get together the four of us in heaven you know it's going to be something looking forward to it the Lord knows exactly what you need and at the time even though I would have thought that I needed a Barbara what I needed was a Marie and no mistakes no mistakes would you stand please we'll be dismissed loving father we are appropriately overwhelmed by your wisdom your love your care your goodness and we just see you working in so many ways that we just do not understand we know that this old world has gone awry we know that in our fallenness we all tend to be self centered we all tend to be so smart and so self sufficient and so knowledgeable and yet the truth of your word really brings all of that up short and exposes it to be just so much human nonsense but in the midst of our ignorance and in the midst of our self will we are so thankful that you are loving and patient and kind and you go to great lengths to reveal things to us that we know and for the presence of each one here this day we trust that the content of your word and the principles set forth will strengthen and establish them and fortify them because there are going to be situations come into their life that will tend to make them question a lot of things about you and about your wisdom and about this whole concept of affirming the will of God and does it really work and is it really true and is that what we're really supposed to do so we thank you for the time that we've been able to share with these dear folks and for the potential that each of them has to put these principles into practice we are so grateful for the love that you extend to us often in ways we don't even understand and all we want to do is grow more and more in it so that our appreciation index for you will super abound and will come to love you and serve you and obey you all the more because of the joy and the confidence you build into us in Christ's wonderful name amen again you you can yourself