



God's Will Accomplished

Chapter 11

Lesson 11

What is the relationship of prayer and "being made perfect"? In other words how does prayer foster our continuing sanctification or growth into Christ likeness? This chapter attempts to address this question.

1. Reflect again on Hebrews 5: 7-10. Consider Christ's reverent submission, learning through suffering, and obedience. How is God challenging you in your prayer life?

This is the second time in Hebrews (2:10) it is mentioned that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. The authors of our book study want us to pay attention to how prayer played a role in the accomplishment of Jesus' perfecting and then relate it to our own. However, let's stop and consider this important passage before we jump to too many conclusions.

In the Bible, "perfection" usually means completeness or maturity. By sharing our experience of suffering, Christ shared our human experience **completely**. When the author of Hebrews states that Jesus **was made perfect** he is not referring to Jesus progressing in holiness (progressive sanctification). Jesus was already holy or perfect before He faced suffering. Instead, he is referring to Jesus' **perfect completion** of His identification with us before God. Because humans experience suffering and death, Christ became fully human and experienced these aspects of being human as well. In God's eyes, Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for God's people, pioneering their salvation through His suffering and death. That Christ both lived and died gives us confidence that we have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weakness (4:15). We have confidence that because Christ conquered death, He also can save us from death. Because Christ lived, died, and rose again, He became *the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*. Christ alone is the only source of salvation because He was the only one who **completed** our life experience without sin, thereby qualifying Him to be our substitute on the cross. This is how He **was made perfect** through suffering.

To make an application to us can be a difficult jump. When we read in our study book, on page 129 the 3rd and 4th paragraphs, about the "shaping" of Jesus by the Father in prayer, and that the same "shaping" (later: being conformed to the image of Christ) can occur in us could be misleading and cause us to miss the value of prayer in our lives in application from Hebrews 5:7-10. Since we can't ask the authors to explain what they mean by "shaping" we would have to assume by their own words that they are

equating Jesus' perfecting with ours, which seems to be missing the intent of the Hebrews author in the passage we are considering.

However, this doesn't mean that prayer is not involved in our growth into Christ likeness. There are several elements involved in our ongoing sanctification which would include God's word (John 17:17) and the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) along with our responses of self-examination (James 1:21) and self-denial (Titus 2:11-12) all being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Prayer seems to be that place where God can continue shape us (transform us) to be His willing servants of reconciliation in this world as we respond with reverent submissive and obedience to His redemptive purposes. Hebrews 5:7-10 gives us the example of Jesus. He reverently submitted to the Father's will, was willing to continue in His identification with us through suffering, and obediently followed the Father's plan of redemption. All of this was worked out in prayer. Here then is our application: as Jesus submitted to the Father, so can we; as Jesus learned through suffering, so can we; and as Jesus obeyed the Father's plan, so can we. And the birthing of these responses, like Jesus, begins in prayer.

2. Considering the reading above, how has prayer been used by God to shape you for His purposes? Has this study changed your perspective on prayer? How?

Read chapter 11 in *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus*, and then consider the following question.

3. How free is the Father to fully accomplish His eternal purposes in your life? If you know of anything in your life which might be blocking this freedom, how can you remove this obstacle?

4. In what ways is God using prayer to change and shape your life according to His redemptive will and purpose?

5. What exactly is at stake through your prayer life?

Beyond the Book:

Read the Lord's pray in Matthew 6:9-13. How do verses 9-10 contribute to our study of God shaping us in prayer?