



Issue 61 – January 18, 2017

The Naz Prayer Ministry



Who's in Charge?

Just to set your mind at ease, that question is not a take-off of the old Abbot and Costello circular comedy routine “Who’s on First.” And for all the sitcom aficionados of the late 1980s, the answer is not “Charles.”

How we answer this question, however, effects every facet of our lives, especially our understanding and practice of prayer.

The pat theological response “God is in control” may come readily to our lips, but how often do those words appear flippant? We live with a wrinkled brow and a voice filled with worry. From time to time, maybe even often, we struggle to assure ourselves as well as others that we are not left to the whims of luck or the winds of uncertainty. We may avoid the tired cliché “Que será será!” (“Whatever will be, will be”), but when faced with the storms of life, do the demeanors we project frame us as beleaguered, victims resigned to our fate, rather than highlighting our claims of faith?

The practice of prayer suggests some measure of faith, but faith in who or what?

Without genuine clarity of God’s sovereignty, our prayer lives will inevitably exhibit spiritual anemia. When we pray we either believe in a God we can trust or a God who is capricious.

Psalm 115:3 declares that “Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes.” Such words should fill us with a deep inner peace, but more than likely we want to rush over to Romans 8:28 assuring us “that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose for them.”

Somehow we see these passages as two different messages, but they are actually one of the same. The first may reach into the vastness of history, and the second centers on us, but to fully grasp the implication of who He is, both passages speak of the One who rules supremely.

The reason we find the verse in Romans so appealing is that we may actually be missing the key words. To the fleshly mind the “all things” working for good is what rings our bells, but we fail to center on “his purpose.” And in Psalm 115, the key words are “as he wishes.” These two writers are talking the same language.

The problem is we too easily fall prey to the driving impulse of our culture to see reality only through the lens of the *self*. We are by nature self-centered and our culture trains us to evaluate everything around us and all aspects of our universe as if we are the center of it all. So, we naturally and mistakenly see Romans as a promise that God is at work to resolve all our conflicts, providing us with wealth and health and a general sense of ease and comfort and of course success.

But Romans as well as the verses in the Psalm point us to a different focal point: the purposes of God. And the God who is eternal and whose desires and purpose are eternal is not confined to any temporary measure of “good” that earthly minds can conceive.

God may indeed provide us health and success and happiness from time to time, but if you’ve paid any attention, you surely have noticed that He also allows us to experience pain and sadness and failure.

So what is going on? How are we to understand His sovereignty? And how will that change us?

Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord, in the weeks ahead, open our hearts and spiritual eyes to infinite truths our finite minds too easily miss and even resist. In these beginning weeks of this New Year, point us in the direction of life lived under Your authority and grace. We renounce any tendency to be self-focused, and we embrace Your eternal purposes.