

Improving Conscious Contact: The Ancient Path to Prayer ken Wilson
#3 A Communion of Saints in Love & Remembrance

The Jesus portal into the “heavenly realms” is a zone of divine love originating in the Father-Son-Holy Spirit: a communion of saints and a fellowship of the Spirit, marked by the thankful remembering of the loved ones before the Lover of All.

First week: Jesus on the path to prayer. A place he was soaked in Abba’s love; a place he needed to visit often; time spent there expressed in tenderest, most compassionate love for others.

Last week: Paul on the path to prayer. Understanding “the heavenly realms” as a dimension beyond 4 dimension of space-time, a spiritual-heavenly dimension. As we surrender to Jesus we are brought into the heavenly realms surrounded in a place of lavish, grace-laden forgiving love.

This week: Paul praying in this place. ***Eph. 1: 15-23.***

Provide an analogy of “heavenly realms,” to hold in back of mind. In the beginning, the spiritual realm existed by virtue of divine love; of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, and the love between them being the Holy Spirit. At **core-source** of everything, the infinite beginning before the Big Bang, **is God**: irreducible relationship in love. **Universe created out of this love**, taking material form, but not limited to material, because love is profoundly spiritual in nature. Can think of spiritual realm under dominion of divine love (not all of it is) as a kind of network like the world wide web. [Phyllis Tickle] [Expanding ball] Can think of each of us as we surrender to divine love as nodal points on web—the love of God between us, powered by the Holy Spirit, who is also love between Father and Son.

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” (Eph. 1: 15-16)

The church—and the heavenly realms in which the church also exists--is a communion of saints: forgiven sinners drawn into the love

between the Father and the Son; no wonder this entry is an immersion in the Holy Spirit!

When he hears about faith we have in the Lord Jesus, and our love for all the saints, he's **ecstatic**. We are there, with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, bathed with him in the light of this love. And cantankerous, sometimes crotchety old St. Paul just can't help himself—he's headlong in love with us, not having met us, except, except, in some mystery sense, in this place...

[Just so don't get wrong idea: saints (forgiven sinners surrendering to divine love), not some Christian clique, like puppies rolling around in a box, because the Jesus brand forgiven sinner-saint is commanded "love your enemies," so love net gets flung out broadly!]

Hold fort, consider implications of c/s. Our God-minimizing materialist worldview, snookers us with worldview blinders into seeing ourselves as isolated individuals. Why modern Christianity so much Me & Jesus malarkey. A Christianity where body of Christ has been reduced to an inflamed appendix awaiting appendectomy....a Christianity where we shuffle about in crowded churches feeling ever so much alone.

We are not alone. "***We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses.***" (Heb. 12: 1) We are part of a communion of saints. And the love of God flows to us from the throne through the other nodal points on the network, this communion of saints.

And even when we are physically distant from the saints (forgiven sinners surrendering to divine love) we are not alone. If our eyes are open to what Paul perceived. **The Divine Hours.**

The **communion of Saints** is a **fellowship of the Spirit**, that transcends the limits of space-time. Wherever we are, whatever we do, we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. [**Milan** first Sunday, missing my mother: "Lord say hi to my mom for me?" Then turn on radio to catch: "Grandma we love you, you know that we do, and everytime we sing this song, we're thinking of you"]

It's a love "for **all** the saints." Most of us can handle "**some of the saints**" but the **all** is a real test. If we have a tendency to define saints in narrow tribal terms—you know, like us, Vineyardites, evangelicals,

but the rest? Well then, we've placed a loyalty to our religious tribe above loyalty to Jesus. Bad move. TDH PRAYER WATCH Feb 7-13
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A report from realm of prayer: "One of the things I do is a Quaker prayer practice of "holding people in the Light." I first heard my mother-in-law do this years ago, and the practice has stayed with me. I experience a lot of relief from the burden of having to know how to pray for people in a specific way and a lot of wonder at how God intervenes in peoples' lives. At times I'm a walker when praying, which means that I'll go up and down my hallway or around my living room with my hands out, palms up, "holding someone in the Light." Asking that the Spirit of Christ work in that person according to his/her need, and for the praise of God." (Donna Kehoe)

2 modes of praying for others, both good: 1) **intercession** (making specific requests for others--Paul asks for these prayers often); at it's best profoundly loving. Sign of c/s, f/s praying for each other a lot. Answers cause of rejoicing, increase faith....(small group reports)

Sometimes making specific requests comes under a cloud of anxiety: **anxious trouble shooting prayer** ("burden of having to know how to pray for people") My version based on my logic: God knows best what they need. What's my best guess of what God knows best? Viewed through lens of God as a loving but frowning, hard to please parent. Zeroing in on our faults eager to see improvement as soon as possible. Behind that, "what bothers me about so and so?"

Fails 2 tests. **Marriage Test:** if you pray for wife that way, can kill your marriage. **Golden Rule Test:** is that how you want others praying for you?

2) **prayer of remembrance.** "***I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.***" Not "remembering to pray for you" but "remembering you in my prayers"

“Remembering”—rich word. **remember**: to hold in memory with some feeling or intention. Memory is one of the 4 functions of the soul (thought-feeling, imagination, choice, memory.)

We are able to hold each other in our hearts through remembrance.
This is a very powerful capacity we’ve been given.

Task of mourning: transition from a relationship of flesh & blood to a relationship of memory. We hold the loved one close in memory. Comforting. Powerful. Because it’s been a way of loving them all along. (Most of our loving of others takes place in memory, no?)

This remembering business profoundly spiritual! Heb. thought: to remember an event is to participate in it again (Passover-Communion); physiological effects e.g remembered exercise

And....**God remembers us**. In fact, we only exist so long as God remembers us. Polkinghorn view of resurrection. At death, physical body turns to dust, but God remembers the information-code that is us. (Our physical matter constantly turning over—what’s continuous about us, that makes us, us, is information, the code (DNA))

Great heart throbbing cry of the psalms: “**Lord, remember us!**” **It’s a way of saying, “Lord hold on to us, and don’t ever let us go!”**

When we remember someone “*in our prayers*,” what’s going on in heavenly realm? We are holding them in our hearts as they are being held simultaneously, with us, in God’s heart. In love, we are holding them in love. Or we are touching them in heart of God. Thru soul capacity of memory. **The effect of this: being pickled in love!**

Paul not one of these “not a critical bone in his body” types. Can zero in on our faults with the best of ‘em. But something different here... knew something different was going on when I couldn’t conjur a negative thought about ones being remembered.

It’s to do with the tone of the place, described in **Eph 1: 3-10** . This is a place where one is pickled in love. When time comes to remember others there....it’s jarring to move from this thick merciful, grace laden forgiving love into anything other than that.

Be in a Room Exercise [expansion from last week] .

1. Create a space, sit down and enjoy the space.
2. Read Eph. 1: 3-10 slowly, meditatively, savoring tone of words
3. When aware of grace-mercy-goodness, remember some loved ones in the presence of that love.

Begin with the people you already love and love you. Ones you are at peace with. Even if that numbers is small.

Simply **name** them and **hold them in memory**, in the presence of Love (proper name love).

Trust that the one before whom you name/remember them knows them and their needs better than you. Just hold them there in that presence. Briefly is fine, or longer if you wish.

Not a one shot deal. Give a light pass. Then again another time. Not something you “work at.” Try it over several days.

[All this stuff builds slowly, over time; begins almost imperceptibly. Accept the whiff, smallest seed, be pleased with smallest beginnings....]

As awareness of grace-forgiving love increases, add others to be remembered....