

Word-Centered Praying

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod emphasizes the importance of word-centered praying, where believers plead God's promises back to Him in faith and understanding.

Duration: 47:12

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the consequences of seeking wealth and riches. He shares a story of a couple who won a sweepstake in Australia, but soon after, their son was kidnapped and murdered. The preacher emphasizes that seeking riches does not guarantee happiness or protection from harm. He highlights the importance of relying on God and His commandments, as well as the power of prayer. The sermon also references verses from the book of Jeremiah and the book of Acts, emphasizing the need to trust in God's promises and teachings. Additionally, the preacher mentions verses from Proverbs that caution against seeking wealth through unjust means.

Transcript

You want to turn to the Word of God, I want to read a few verses from 2 Samuel chapter 7, the occasion after, it's one of those occasions when Nathan came to David and talked to him, this was not following the sin problem he had, this was another occasion entirely. Verse 17, 2 Samuel 7 and 17. According to all these words and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that you have brought me hitherto? This was yet a small thing in your sight, O Lord God, for you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? What can David say more unto you? For, Lord, you know thy servant. For your word's sake and according to your own heart you have done all these great things to make your servant know them.

Wherefore, you are great, O Lord God, for there is none like you, neither is there any God beside you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like your people, like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for your land, before your people, which you redeemed to yourself from Egypt, from the nations and their gods. For thou hast confirmed to thyself by people Israel to be a unto you forever, and you, Lord, are become their God.

And now, O Lord God, the word which you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as you have said. And let your name be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel, and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build you a house.

Therefore your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto you. And now, O Lord God, you are that God, and your words are true. And you have promised this goodness unto your servant.

Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, has spoken it, and with thy blessing, that the house of your servant be blessed forever. Word-centered praying.

I suppose all of us have wondered at times why it is we pray so much and perhaps see so little. And automatically we think of James 4, God said, you have not because you ask not, or else you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, wrongly, selfishly, that you may, as one translation says, spend it on your pleasures. And of course that's a problem.

But in 2 Peter 1 we're told that God has given, his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue. God has given us all things that pertain to the Christian life. And if you'd like to have that summarized wonderfully and neatly, Colossians 3.11. Christ is all and in all.

Now I mean we can complicate that if we want, and sometimes we do. Christ is all. All you ever need.

In Colossians 2 Paul said, you are complete in him. In him you are made fulness, I think one translation says. Complete in Christ.

There's a song built around those words. What's prayer? Prayer of course is a beggar talking to a king. You and I are the beggars of course, and God is the king.

We don't have anything and he has everything, so we come to him with our petitions. That's a limited definition of prayer. Here's a better, perhaps more theological definition, and I'm sure you've heard it before.

Prayer is a Christian believer pleading the promises back to God. Like David said, do as you have said. Do as you have said.

A Christian believer pleading the promises back to God. There are 13 less, remember, 13 less than 7,500 promises in the Bible. So Herbert Lockyer tells us in his book on all the prayers of the Bible, and I have no reason to doubt him, although I've never counted.

But think of it. If somebody said they would give you \$5 for every promise in the Bible of those 7,500 less 13 that you could accurately quote, how much money would you have in your pocket when you left this building? There probably would be some that wouldn't have enough to buy a postage stamp, but I wouldn't say that's true of all by any means. But people, we need to familiarize ourselves with the promises of God, and do like David did.

Say to God, God, do as you have said. And you can't really pray that way unless you know what God has said. Remember Peter in 2 Peter 1, he said that God has given to us exceeding great and precious

promises, that by these you might become partakers of God's divine nature.

What a thought, to become a partaker of God's nature through the promises of God. Or a prayer pleading the promises back to God. Spurgeon said prayer was the rope that pulled on the bell that rang in the ears of God.

God isn't sleeping, not ever. But he loves to hear that bell ring. I saw people in India going into a Hindu temple, matter of fact I got movies of them.

And there was a bank of bells about 20 feet square, small bells about this size, and before they went into the temple they were striking these bells, and we discovered they were doing this to awaken their gods. So their gods would know they were coming into the temple. And at the end of this bank of bells there was a huge bell about this size, and we would be sure to strike that one, just in case their god was in a deep sleep.

And I remember seeing a mother lift her little child up to strike the bell, and the child didn't know what the mother meant, and the mother got frustrated, and she took the child and slugged the bell with the child. And inside the temple there were some hideous idols. Spurgeon didn't have that in mind.

Prayer is the rope that pulls on the bell that rings in the ears of God. And if you don't pray enough, you know what the Lord will do? Because he loves to hear your voice in prayer. He'll bring some problems into your life, so you have to pray.

It says, they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them. So if I don't pray when the sun is shining, God will send some stormy days, so I'll learn how to pray. He loves to hear your voice.

Prayer. Prayer has been called the breathing of the soul, and that's based on Lamentations 3.56 where Jeremiah said, hide not your ear at my breathing, at my cry, the breathing of the soul. When I awake, I am still with thee.

You awaken through the night, you talk to God, you go back to sleep, you awaken in the morning, your first thoughts are of God, you talk to God. First thing in the morning, last thing at night. That's the normal Christian life.

If it's not that way, then of course there must be something wrong. We need to search out before God as to what's wrong. David prayed after he heard the word and will of God.

Nathan came and said, this is what God is saying to you. And when David heard all of this, his heart was so full, he went into the temple of God, and he sat down, and he talked to his God. Do you know that Daniel did the same thing? He was reading the book of Jeremiah.

Daniel chapter 9 tells us about that in the opening verses. He was reading the book of Jeremiah. And suddenly, in the book of Jeremiah, he saw something that God had promised to do.

And he began to pray. And oh, how he prayed. You read that prayer of Daniel's in the ninth chapter of his book.

What a prayer. He called on God with all the intensity of his spirit, and confessed the sins of the nation of Israel. And called on God, as David did.

Oh God, do what you said. Do what you said you'd do. The Lord God is a sun and shield.

The Lord will give grace and glory. Oh God, do what you said you'd do. You've blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

God, do what you said you did. That's a large part of prayer. The early church, Acts 4. There was a second Pentecost, a second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in the fourth chapter of Acts.

As you probably know. But how did it begin? The apostles were threatened and told not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus. So they went back to the church and told them what had happened.

And there followed a short, apparently a short, but very powerful and remarkable prayer meeting that resulted in a second great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When they had prayed, the place was shaken, or assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they spoke the word of God with boldness, and with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

But did you ever notice their prayer? They called on God. On the God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all things that are in them. And then they quoted scripture.

Who by the mouth of your servant David hath said, Why do the people rage, the heathen rage? And the people imagined a vain thing. And in quotes from the second Psalm, they quoted the church dead, because it lifted up their voices to God with one accord. You know, there have been times in the history of the church where great revivals have been done, when God's people were so under the compelling power of the Holy Spirit that they all together prayed the same words.

Dr. Orr records that in some of his books on revival. So what happened in Acts 4 was not all that unusual. But notice, they quoted the word of God, and then they took off in prayer from that point.

And we should learn something from that, as we seek, and I trust we do, to pray without ceasing. And then in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God and Christ Jesus concerning you. Let's think of this, let's pursue this a little.

And in Psalm 6, the writer said, The Lord has heard my supplication, and he will receive my prayer. Have you ever told God about that? Sometimes when I'm praying, I say, Lord, you heard my supplication, and I believe you will receive my prayer, because he said he would in Psalm 6. Or in Psalm 43, there's a verse that I've prayed, dear people, many times. Oh, send out your light and your truth, let them lead me.

When I'm in darkness and wondering what to do, which way to go, I often pray that prayer. Because I'm in God gave it to us, and I'm pleading the word of God back to God. It's not exactly a clear promise, but it's certainly a promise in M-below form.

Oh, God, send out your light and your truth, let them lead me, cause me to know the way where I should walk. For I lift up my soul unto thee, lead me in a plain path because of my enemies. I often plead verses like that back to my God.

I just tell God, look, God, I am of yesterday, and I don't know anything. Teach us what we shall say unto you, because we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. And I keep reminding God of what he said, and he loves to be reminded of what he has said.

Psalm 55. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and thou shalt hear my voice. I remind God of that sometimes.

Or in Psalm 90, I sometimes pray this prayer. I've often prayed it. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

Lord, let the beauty, your beauty be seen on me. I read in Ezekiel, God speaks about my calmness, which I've put upon you. And I say, Lord, put your calmness on me, so when people see me, they do not see that fallen nature, they see Jesus Christ.

Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you were present during the revival in 71, when that Christian girl, 16 years of age, came to the platform and asked if she might sing her testimony without accompaniment. Fourteen hundred people or so in the meeting.

And she sang, O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer, O to be like thee, purest thou art. I asked my wife after that session what God said to her. And she said, Honey, I don't ever expect to get that close to heaven until I get there.

And I think it was a unanimous testimony of all in that meeting that God did something very unusual when that girl sang, O to be like thee, God put your calmness on me. Word-centered praying. Someone said, Prayer, any prayer that begins with God will end with God.

And when we talk about praying in the Spirit, we're really talking about word-centered praying. It begins with God. It comes from God.

Therefore, God will hear his own word. He's bound to do that, being a just God. Here's another prayer in Psalm 118.

Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar. Have you ever prayed that prayer? I've prayed it many times. That doesn't make me any better than you.

I don't mean that. But I've often prayed that prayer. O God, keep me on the cross.

You know, they used to have, there were four horns, brass horns on the altar of burnt offering, and they used to take an animal struggling and tie its four feet to the four horns of the altar with cords, and then take its life and light the fire and offer it as a sacrifice to God. That's what the writer had in mind. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.

And dear people, if you're serious about the Christian life, you need to pray a prayer like that. God, tie me, nail me to the cross, so I'll never come down. I'll never come off it for your glory.

Open thou mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of your love. Ever prayed that prayer? Well, I've prayed that prayer many times, too. As a matter of fact, I never read the Bible without first asking God to be my teacher.

Think of it. You talk about a Bible school? Think about the teacher-pupil ratio in this Bible school. One teacher, one pupil.

God the teacher. When Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, you remember what he said in chapter 4? He said, If so be you have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. What is he

saying? To people at Ephesus who never, ever saw Christ or heard him in the flesh? He said, You've been taught by Jesus.

You and I can be taught by Jesus, too. I say again, What a Bible school! And it appeals to my scorched heart because it doesn't cost me a dollar a year. Open thou mine eyes, O God, my ears, my eyes, and I'll behold wondrous things, wondrous things out of your law.

What a thought. Here's another one. Psalm 119, 133.

Order my steps in your word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. By the way, that prayer I pray every morning, every morning. I give the day to God in prayer, and then I say, God, order my steps in your word.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Order my steps in thy word.

Let not any iniquity have dominion over me today. Keep my mind pure. Guard my eyes, my thoughts, and everything.

God, let not any iniquity have dominion over me today. Don't you think God would answer a prayer like that when he gave us the prayer in the first place? Well, of course he would. Some people think, you know, that these prayer thoughts are like a carrot on the stick that God has tied on the donkey's head to keep him moving down the road.

Knowing that he'll never really get the carrot. But when he gets to heaven, God will give him a real juicy carrot to make up for all those years when he never got a hold of the carrot down here on earth. Now, if you believe in that kind of a Godly pot company right now, I can't.

Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you. Do you believe that? He cares. He knows.

He cares. A missionary in South America, her husband was tragically killed, Oswald Smith, many years ago. He heard about it.

I think it was Oswald Smith. Correct me if I'm wrong. And he sat down and wrote a song, God Understands Your Sorrow.

He sees the falling tear and whispers, I am with thee. But in fault or not, no fear. God understands your heartache.

He sees the falling tear. He does. He understands.

He cares. He really cares. But we have to believe he cares.

And say, God, I know you haven't forgotten, but you told me to cast all my care on you. And I'm doing that right now. Be anxious for nothing.

Don't worry about anything. But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Are you doing that daily? Hourly? God's waiting for you to do it.

God's likewise waiting for me to do it. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. Ever told God about that? I say, hey, God, I'm praising you.

You said seven times a day. I hope you don't get weary listening. Well, some people say, you know, if I had more money in the bank, I could praise God a little louder.

I'm really broke. Are you broke? What did God say to Abraham? When Abraham turned down that offer that the king of Sodom gave him in the spoils of war, which legitimately were Abraham's, Abraham said to the king of Sodom, I will not take from a thread to a shoelace. Boy, he sure doesn't sound like a modern North American Christian.

I won't take from a thread to a shoelace, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich. He wanted God to get all the glory. And right after that, God came to him and said, that was in chapter 14, in chapter 15, the first part of the chapter, God said to Abraham, fear not, Abraham, I am your shield and your exciting great reward.

Hearken, my beloved brother, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him? Some of us have too much money in the bank to ever learn what faith is. It's a blessing sometimes to be broke. You know, lots of Christians, they buy sweepstake tickets, you know, and lottery tickets, lottery tickets.

You know what a lottery ticket is, by the way? It's a tax on fools. Now, that's not original with me. Do you know why? You know why it is? Because the Canadian government, they get so much money through these lotteries, that you and I don't have to pay quite as much taxes, see.

So they're getting their money, in a sense, it's a tax on fools, because only one in 14 million ever wins the big jackpot, you know. Forget about it. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

And at the same time, the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Tell God about that. Remind God about that.

And we His pleasure. And He'll take care of your needs. But sometimes I need to know how to be abased, as well as how to abound.

I must know, as Paul, how to suffer me, as well as how to have some money in the bank. All right. These are things God has told us.

Oh, by the way, in Proverbs 28, there are three verses that talk about this lottery thing. Did you know that? He that by usury and unjust gain increases his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. That's not a very good promise.

And then, he that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent. The margin reading says he won't be unpunished. You'll be punished in ways you might not even think of.

In Australia, a couple won a sweepstake. I forget how much they got, half a million or whatever. Not long after, their son was kidnapped and brutally murdered.

He was kidnapped, ransom demanded, and the boy was never seen alive again. The parents said, we wish to God we'd never won that sweepstake. Make haste to be rich, you won't be unpunished.

That's what God said. And then it says this. He that makes haste to be rich has a sick eye.

A sick eye. If you've got God, you've got all you need. And that's true for me also.

Well, these are some things we need to think about. You know, oh, the last verse, verse 176 of Psalm 119. David said, I've gone astray like a lost sheep.

Seek your servant, for I don't forget your commandments. Have you ever prayed that prayer? I have. Oh God, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it prone to leave the God I love.

Seek thy servant. I've gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek your servant.

I haven't forgotten your commandments. But oh God, I just feel that tendency to wander. God, keep your hand on me.

Don't let me stray. What beautiful promises. And in Hosea 14, and remember in Romans 15, it says, whatever things were written before were written for our learning.

When we, through patience and comfort of the Spirit, receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips. Asher shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses.

From thee the fatherless finds mercy. Have you ever taken those words to God in prayer? Take with you words and turn to the Lord. Say unto him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.

Oh dear people, God is smiling on us right now. He wants to bless our hearts. He wants to fill us.

But we're so caught up with things and thoughts. We don't have time to look into the face of God. We don't spend time with God.

And we don't learn what he said. We can't say like David did, do as you said. Do it in my heart.

God wants to bless us. Oh how he wants to bless us. And so often he can't because of where we're at spiritually.

You know in Matthew 7, we have a promise there, don't we? Matthew 7, 7 and 8. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds. And to him that knocks it shall be opened. Have you ever pled that promise back to God? God, I'm asking you to do this, please.

You said in Matthew 7, 7 and 8. Oh God loves that. Plead the promises, exceeding great and precious promises. Plead them before God because that's praying.

That's praying. And when you're praising God, praise God in the language of scripture. Great is the Lord and great to be praised.

And we told God that when he said it's not original. Why does it have to be original? There's no new thing under the sun anyway. Let it be original in this sense that it's original with you.

God said it. I'll say it. Back to my God.

That's part of fellowship. It's a large part of prayer. Now we all know Psalm 139, 23 and 24.

We've probably at some time all prayed that prayer. Search me, oh God, and know my heart. You know why we need to do that? Because in Jeremiah 7, 10 the Lord said, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? You can't. I, the Lord, search the heart. Search me, oh God.

Lord, you're the only one. You said you're the only one that knows the human heart. I don't even know why I do some things.

I don't even know why I think the way I think sometimes. But Lord, you know, search my heart. In Proverbs it says, The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord searching all the inner parts.

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. Now we've suggested a few things. Word-centered praying.

And this leads us naturally to something else. That is to my attitude to the word of God. Colossians 3, 16, for example.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Are you filled full of the word of God? If not, remember you should be. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Did you ever notice the parallel between Ephesians 5, 18-20 and Colossians 3, 16-18? In both cases he talks about women being submissive to their husbands. In both cases he talks about us having a rejoicing heart, a heart of thanksgiving. But in Ephesians 5 he says, Be filled with the spirit.

And in Colossians 3 he says, Be filled with the word of God. That doesn't mean they are identical. But it does mean that they should be.

If I want to be filled with the word of God, I should fill myself with the spirit of God. But it does say be filled. I know I can't in that sense, but in another way I can.

Moody was not always filled with the spirit, you know. One Saturday he made 85 house calls and Richard Ellsworth Day, who wrote the book, one book, on Moody's life, on what was called Bishop Lowell, he said it was a feat of flesh work not to be admired or emulated. And Moody got so empty, he said he never spent five minutes a day reading the Bible or praying.

And that's when he went to that old Christian and asked him what the problem was. And the old Christian said, Mr. Moody, take a deep breath. And he did.

He said, now breathe it out. And he did. He said, now breathe it out again.

He said, I can't. I have to breathe in first. He said, well, now that's your problem.

You know what Moody started doing then? He started rising at four o'clock and reading the Bible and praying every day until eight o'clock, four hours, with the Bible in prayer. And it was after he started doing that, that God filled him with the spirit in that dramatic, dynamic way. It probably wouldn't be safe for God to fill a person with the spirit who is not really filled with the word of God, because you might run off into some penchant, fanaticism.

We need the word of God to keep us moving in a straight path. Now probably somebody is saying, I would love to be filled with the word of God, but I just don't have a hunger for it. And the question then would be,

you know, how do you get a hunger for the word of God when you don't have one? That's a good question.

If you're not hungry, then how can you eat a big meal? You can't. You look at the food, you feel sick, you'll walk away. You don't want that.

You don't have any hunger. Now in 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter deals with a problem. You remember in that second verse he says, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

But that doesn't solve the problem. How can I desire it when I don't desire it? But let's look at the context. It begins with the word wherefore, which is like the word therefore.

We talked about that yesterday. It takes you back into the context. So let's go back in the context to see what he's referring to when he says wherefore.

He says in verse 22 of the first chapter, seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the spirit unto, and remember that word means motion toward, unto unfamed, that is a genuine non-hypocritical love of the brethren. See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the goodness of man is as the flower of the field of the grass.

The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away, but he that does the will of God abides forever. Wherefore, laying aside all malice, that secret hatred in the heart, and all guile, remember that's what the fisherman uses when he baits the hook, and hypocrisy is an actor on the stage of life, and envy. Are you totally, totally happy with what you have? Are you still complaining because there's so many squeaks in the floor? Envy, evil speaking, gossip, thou shalt not go up and down as a tailbearer among the children of thy people.

And when Paul wrote to Deacon's wives, he said, don't be slanderers. And a slanderer, the Greek word is diabolos, devil. Don't be a devil.

When you gossip, you do Satan's work. And sometimes in Christian assemblies, there are many little devils, members of the church. Because you see, if these things are in my heart or in your heart, you will not have a desire for the word of God.

But when you get rid of these things, you'll find automatically that you have a strong desire for the word of God. I've seen it happen in the lives of people again and again and again. Isaiah 125, God said, I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin.

You want to get rid of the things that are making it impossible for you to have a hunger for the word of God, then ask God to do what he said in Isaiah 125. Or Proverbs 123, God said, you turn at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you.

I'll make known my words unto you. That's what he said. So let, allow, deal with any sin that prevents it.

And allow the word of Christ to dwell in you richly in all wisdom. And remember, the word of Christ is not just the words of Christ that in some Bibles you see in green or in red. If you're going to paint all the words of Jesus in red, you're going to have to paint the Bible from Genesis right through to Revelation.

Because in 1 Peter 1 we read that the spirit of Christ was in all the Old Testament prophets. So what Daniel wrote was part of the words of Christ. All the Old Testament, that's the word of Christ.

All of the New Testament for Paul said, and he wrote 13 epistles at least, 1 Corinthians chapter 14, if any man among you think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, then he said, let him acknowledge that the things that I wrote unto you are the commandments of the Lord. The commandments of the Lord. I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also receive.

From whom did he receive these truths? But from the Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to Paul not once but many times after the initial appearance on the road to Damascus. Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. I hope it is in your heart also.

Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow. Thereby, there's no other way by which we can grow, no other means that God has provided except through his word, growing grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ.

Now, as I close, John 15, 7. The Lord Jesus Christ said, and it begins with an if. And you know, sometimes we don't like any if in our prayers. And we could point out that of the 400 prayers in the Bible, I think only two have an if in them.

One by Moses, one by Jesus. And that's interesting. But this promise has an if in it, and we have to know it.

If you abide in me, Christ said. And my words abide in you. You shall ask what you will, because God knows you won't be asking selfishly, and you will not be asking foolishly or ignorantly.

Because you're full of the word of God. You know what God has said. You know what God has promised.

And when you come to pray, you're guided and you're guarded by that. So, if you abide in me, that means if I walk in a sweet, unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ, and you know and I know that the only thing that breaks that fellowship is sin. Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows.

Brethren, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. And sometimes those sins come in between, and we're no longer really abiding in Christ the way that we should. And then maybe we need to pray the prayer following Ephesians 3, 14 and on.

For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may abide, there's that word, that Christ may abide in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. And just in case that stagnates you, then he added this thought. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Have you ever prayed that prayer in Ephesians 3? I've prayed it sometimes. Oh God, oh my God, strengthen me with power by your Spirit in the inner man, so my relationship with Jesus Christ will be what it ought to be. Sweet.

So I'll be abiding in Christ if you abide in me. And already in the first part of chapter 15 of John he said, abide in me and I in you. I am the vine, you are the branches.

You get all your nourishment and sustenance from me. Severed from me you can do nothing. We must never forget that.

So if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will. What you will, and it shall be done unto you. But you know there are many Christians who ignore the if, the conditions.

And they pray this, and they pray that, and they pray something else. And they roar in the presence of God, and they roar out again, in and out without any ceremony at all. And then they wonder why their prayers don't get answered.

And sometimes they secretly conclude the Bible really isn't true. You know, it doesn't work. I pray a lot, God doesn't do anything.

Then how do you account for the fact that Charles or George Muller had a record of 85,000 answers to pray which he kept in a prayer book? The date he prayed it, the day God answered the prayer he prayed, 85,000 of them before he died. And God doesn't play favorites except in one respect. It says God is no respecter of persons.

All right, get that in our hearts. But it also says in one of the Psalms, Though the Lord be high, yet he has respect unto the lowly. But the proud he knows are far off.

Think of David then. Go in and sit before the Lord and say, oh God. You've given us these exceeding great and precious promises.

Do as you said. Do as you said. And David, you'll notice, he said, God, you've promised not only to bless me but my house for a long time to come.

Are you praying the blessing of God not only on your children but your grandchildren perhaps? We should be looking far down, far ahead and praying the blessing of God. I had an auntie. She was a Christian of all my relatives, the only one I knew as a Christian when I was a boy.

And I thought she was the neatest person in the whole wooden thing because she was always laughing. She was so friendly, poking us kids in the ribs, playing with us. We had another aunt who never got invited to her house except maybe once every four years.

And when we came in the door, take off your robbers. Be careful where you walk. Don't you sit on that chair.

And we went on like this the whole time we were there. We just felt miserable. And then we got a couple of cookies that you'd be ashamed to give to a dog, you know.

We never liked going there. But my other auntie, and she's still living in Vancouver today. I'm not sure how old she is.

She must be in her 90s now. But I haven't the slightest doubt that she prayed for me as a boy and my three brothers. And there's no doubt in my mind because she walked with God that she prayed for us and probably shed tears over us.

And then we came to know Christ as our personal Savior. And she pushed us along after we became Christians. Thank God for her.

Oh God.

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