

Concerning Prayer

by John Kennedy

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a vital relationship with Christ and obedience to God's will in order to engage effectively in the ministry of intercession and have a meaningful prayer life.

Duration: 1:04:42

Scripture: Psalm 2:1-2, Matthew 6:9-13, Acts 4:23-31

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Holy Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of prayer and the early church's prayer meetings. The sermon begins with the mention of the Lord's Prayer, specifically the line 'Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors.' The speaker then reads from Acts chapter 4, which describes a prayer meeting of the early church after Peter and John were released from being arrested. The believers lift up their voices to God with one accord, acknowledging His power as the creator of heaven and earth. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to be concerned about revealing the holiness of God in their daily lives and to be actively engaged in prayer and intercession.

Transcript

Brother Chase has just expressed this first hour of each morning is to be given over to the Ministry of Prayer and Intercession, and yet I am sure that the words which he quoted from the scriptures, the request of the disciples, Lord teach us how to pray, is a request which very often comes from our own hearts and is one which certainly has been impressed upon me this morning. How much of the prayer which so often we hear in these days is superficial and is self-centered, and how again and again we need to go back to the Lord with that simple request which came from one of the disciples in Luke 11, Lord teach us how to pray. And I wanted this morning to go back to two very familiar scriptures, in fact one of them probably enshrines the words which, the first word of scripture which most of us learn, ever learn.

I was brought up in a rather traditional so-called Christian background, and the words of, which are contained in Matthew's gospel chapter 6 and from the 9th verse on were probably the first words of the Bible which I ever learned to say. When I first learned them I probably wasn't conscious that they were from the Bible at all, I hardly knew what the Bible was, what the New Testament was. But I learned these words, words which in the so-called churches of our country are said over again and again on Lord's Day morning, are repeated again and again in the homes and the schools and the colleges of our country, and yet which are so very imperfectly understood, and yet which within themselves enshrine some of the great

reasons why we should pray.

Words which are flawed repeated in order that he might give to us his people something of a great principle which lie behind all prayer and all intercession. Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 to 13, after this manner therefore pray ye, our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil, or deliver us from the evil one.

And along with these verses I wish to read a further few verses from the book of the Acts chapter 4, Acts chapter 4 from verse 23 to verse 31, and we have here an account of one of the prayer meetings of the early church, the first prayer meeting probably church prayer meeting of which we are informed in the scripture. Peter and John had been arrested, had been questioned, had been released, and being let go they went to their own company and reported all that the chief elders, the chief priests and elders had said unto them, and when they heard that they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord thou art God which has made heaven and earth and the sea and all that in them is, who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said, why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever that thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

And now Lord behold their threatening and grant unto thy servant that with all boldness they may speak thy word by stretching forth thine hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they speak the word of God with boldness. The words of our our Lord in Matthew's gospel chapter 6, as I have said these are words which again and again are repeated by those who profess to meet in the name of the Lord and yet as I'm sure all of us here are aware our Lord did not initially give these words that they might be repeated as we have them here again and again as a particular set prayer.

But they were given by the Lord in order that we might understand these these principles. Divine principles whereby we may come into his presence to come into his presence and engage in the great ministry of intercession. There is a prayer of course which can be be prayed by by all men by the person who is farthest away from the presence of God and that prayer is the prayer of the publican Lord be merciful unto me a sinner.

Yet when we enter the realm of of intercession a realm of prayer which touches those who particularly are of the the household of God we enter a much deeper realm and a realm which first of all brings to us a challenge a challenge which affects our own spiritual life our own walk with God our own relationship with other men and women our brothers and sisters in Christ and the world at large. The challenge of Christian character the challenge of as I have already said a spiritual walk and without breaking up to that challenge our own relationship with God in Christ prayer as our Lord desired that we should engage in it the ministry of intercession becomes something which is totally impossible and as we look together at these words in Matthew 6 the words of the Lord's prayer as we call it we are brought back again face to face with something of that great responsibility. I have already said that so much of the prayer which we which we hear in these days is prayer which is self-centered and I think I think that is particularly so with the Lord's

people those who have come to some knowledge into some knowledge of redemption as it is to be found in Christ.

Lord's people as they gather together pray prayers which so often are essentially self-centered and self-interested perhaps it is true to say that in the formal prayers which we hear repeated by those who know nothing of the life in Christ we hear words which of themselves would be more words which tend to the to the glory of God and to exalt our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And yet when we come to the the expression of prayer given by the Lord's people so often it is it is self-centered concerned with our own our own needs our own little our own little requirements our physical needs our own little troubles our own little difficulties our own material needs our material wants our material lacks concerned with these things. Not that God is disinterested in these things God is interested in all of these things and yet surely these things should not be the things which occupy our thinking occupy the thinking of the concern of God's people.

As I have said God is interested in these things and yet in this very chapter from which we have just read Matthew chapter 6 later on seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness there is our aim there is our purpose and all these things these other things all these other things shall be shall be added unto you. These are not our first concern and if we see anything in these the verses 9 to 13 of Matthew 6 the Lord's prayer surely the first thing which strikes us is that the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to be concerned personally and formlessly with him with his glory with his will with his purpose with his kingdom and not until we are concerned with these things is there this little request which has to do with our own daily wants and wishes our own daily requirements give us this day our daily bread but that is something which comes long after these other major and primary concerns of the spiritual life and in our ministry of intercession our ministry ministry of prayer our hearts and our minds surely must first of all be be centered upon Christ not upon our own interests not upon our own wants not upon our own needs but upon him upon his interest upon his kingdom upon his will upon his righteousness his glory and his honor. To say that of course is to say something which should be true of all spiritual living going back to the prophet Isaiah all we like people have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way man born into this world separate from God and going his own way the center of sin the basis of sin lies in in man's self-sufficiency his concern and his desire for the things which minister to his own needs.

Sin is essentially self-will we have strayed from God and man continues to stray from God because within himself he is self-sufficient he feels that his own life his life can be lived independently of the will of God or independently of the power of God self is essentially the basis of sin and if we are saved from sin as we as we claim to be through faith in Christ that we have entered the glorious world of redemption the kingdom of God it essentially follows that we are saved from a concern from a primary concern with the things of self but no longer are we are we are we taken up are we we occupied with our own needs our own requirements our own comfort but that we are brought into a realm of living where our desires first and foremost we are beyond completely beyond the things of self

are centered not in what we need or in what we want but are centered in the interest of someone who is beyond us centered of course in other words in the interest of God when our whole outlook is beyond ourself we no longer recognize ourselves I no longer recognize myself as the center of this little world in which I live but my center my goal is is God his will and his purpose and therefore there is essentially something could we even say unrevealed in a prayer or in a prayer life which is so totally occupied with with my needs with God giving me my daily requirements or with God taking me out of this little trouble or that little trouble or the other little trouble not I say that God is disinterested in these things and yet our whole concern that we are to engage effectively in this

ministry of intercession must be so far beyond and of course this as we look into the life as we look into the lives of the apostles look into the life for example of the apostle Paul we find something of that great concern which first and foremostly was concerned with the heart and with the mind of God and concerned with his people and was whole just interested in his his own circumstances think of Paul's prison epistle think of some of the letters which he wrote to God's people while he himself was languishing in jail he knew not whether he would ever be ever be released to visit the people of God again whether he would ever engage in public ministry and yet in these letters we find so little mention even of the fact that he is in bond he speaks of it flimsily from from time to time his

his bonds the fact that he is a prisoner of the Lord and so on and yet it is but a passing mention there is no concentration of thought upon his own difficulties much greater than the difficulties which any of us here endure at the moment his concern was beyond his his own immediate circumstances his concern was upon the Lord his concern was upon the Lord's people and above all upon the will of God in his people that was the concentration of his thoughts and of note of entering into a deeper understanding a deeper expression of that will and of that purpose the supreme example the great example of that of course in Paul's epistles is his letter to the Philippians there languishing in jail in a position of such great uncertainty hoping as he expresses in the first chapter of that letter

that well if he may be free one day to visit the Philippians and to have fellowship that with them personally again over the things of the Lord and yet at the same time not knowing what the future held and recognizing that well it would be far better to be with Christ if that is the will of the Lord to be brought immediately into his presence he didn't know the uncertainty of his position and yet and surely that is the most difficult of opposition to be uncertain of the future if he if Paul had only known that well tomorrow he would see the Lord face to face well he would be preparing himself for that or if he knew that within another week or two he would be back again ministering amongst the people of God he would be looking forward to that but here he is in this position of dreadful

uncertainty and yet that doesn't particularly concern him he is concerned with the Lord's glory in the Philippian assembly and he is concerned himself about entering into a deeper understanding of the things that are in Christ or pressing on towards the prize for the prize of high calling of God in Christ Jesus and so concerned with the fact that although in all these years he had learned so much of Christ yet he had not attained rather like how not myself to have apprehended this one thing I do moving on all he knew in the last hour of his life yet not living a Christian life a spiritual life which was was stagnant not introspective looking within but looking without and looking with what looking beyond looking under the Lord concerned with his glory concerned with his honor and

concerned with the outworking of his purpose purposes in his people who were still free to meet together worship together to minister his word and witness for Christ in God's world that was the concern of Paul and that must be our concern too and it is to that concern that the Lord points us in the first words of this prayer our father the one to whom we are related and intercession spiritual intercession of course is totally impossible apart from a vital relationship with Christ the relationship of sonship great relationship of children to a father apart from that we cannot pray we can say words but words which of themselves are meaningless and words in a sense I would suggest to which God is in no way obliged to listen ah yes the republican said Lord be merciful unto me a sinner and I'm

sure God heard that prayer and when we prayed that prayer likewise God heard us and yet it was all of God's prayer it was all of God's grace yet when we enter into a relationship with God through Christ we

enter into into a new realm and the realm in a sense in which God is is obligated to us you may have a little boy in your family he runs off to some house in a neighboring street the people whom he has maybe never seen before maybe strikes up a friendship with their children and he says to these people give me something to eat feed me I'm hungry well these strangers are under no obligation to feed your children oh they may they may give him something out of their own love and out of their their own grace but they're they're under no obligation to take care of his needs he's your child

and you're under obligation to look after him these people are under obligation to look after their own children because he belongs there and you're under obligation to look after your children because they belong to you as I say they may give him something because because of their own their own grace it's all it's all it's all a matter of grace they're under no obligation and in a sense it's the same with God often God hears us and hears those who come to him with some flippant request asking something that they have have no right to ask how often God hears the the prayer of some godless person person who has no interest in way in his ways who who comes to him and asks him for release from some trouble because they don't have any other way out of their difficulties often God in his

offering grace and sovereign mercy soothes God and lifts up a person such as that hears and answer a prayer answers a prayer which in a sense he is in no under no obligation to listen to and yet when we enter that realm of relationship with God we are on a different different basis totally from that God is in shall I say a special sense concerned with us Christ loved the church and gave himself specifically for the church because God has a certain purpose which is to be worked out to us his people who compose his body who make up his church a purpose which is going to be worked out in no other way and to no other people but to us and in that sense God is particularly obligated to us particularly desires of listening to us hearing our requests so in a very special sense a very special

relationship we are in a very special relationship with God when we are we bow before him in in sonship bow before him in that relationship of children to father and it is in that sense of relationship essentially with which in which we we must follow if we are to engage effectively in this ministry of intercession and as children obedient to the father whom we recognize intercession brings to us the the obligation to to obey to recognize the the will and the purpose of God to recognize the the sovereignty of God in Jesus Christ intercession brings with us it brings to us the the obligation to to bow to the will of God if we are to unite together in the the days of this week to ask for the fulfillment of the will and the purpose of God within ourselves or within others we must be very

concerned that we ourselves are living lives which are under the authority of Jesus Christ the ministry of prayer and the ministry of intercession brings firstly and foremostly an obligation to us to obey God practically not only to come with the words our father upon our lips but to recognize him as such to recognize his position of supremacy of sovereignty our fathers we can't in heaven and to bow therefore to be ready to bow therefore to his will even although at times we do not understand we do not recognize the way which he is leading us as i have already said a number of times so much of our praying in these days is is superficial is concerned with our own immediate needs we're in trouble and we want God to deliver us from the trouble we have a sickness a little sickness a little

illness and we want the to take it away well as i have also said God is interested in in these things and yet there is so much that God may desire to desire to teach us through our trials and through our tribulations the scripture speaks it speaks much of what we learn through the difficulties which we encounter and the the place which suffering and trial has in the will and in the purpose of God in leading us farther on in a

knowledge of him leading us into a deeper understanding of his way and i don't necessarily believe that it is always in the purpose of God that we should be badgering him to to take us out of our difficulties to remove our trials from us unless we should remove our sicknesses from God will do these things so often and does do these things so often and yet very often

we must recognize that there is a time when in the sovereignty of God he allows upon our lives so much more than we understand he allows the difficulties which to us are so incomprehensible we cannot possibly understand why God has taken us in this particular way and yet after we have passed through this particular trial not understanding so often we look back and we we see the reason for it all and there flows into our lives into our experience the richness and the grace which before we never could have known we never could have known apart from that period of time apart from that difficulty apart maybe from that illness which God has allowed which God has brought upon us in his own sovereign grace because he is sovereign and because he sees just the experiences which we need to lead us

on into that knowledge of himself which will bring us into a place of the place of usefulness which he desires which will make us fit channels for his words vessels meet for the master's use fit to be used by him and as we approach this ministry of intercession we need again and again to be to be ready for this to be ready for just that related to God in Christ and recognizing his sovereignty and to be recognizing his sovereignty even when we are in the midst of these circumstances which we don't which we don't understand and everything is going well of course it's very easy to recognize the sovereignty of God but in the midst of our difficulty sometimes it's it's a different question and yet and yet there it is the Lord asks us to to recognize this his presence with us in the midst of

our trial to recognize the fact that he is above them all and that nothing occurs in the lives of his people except apart from his knowledge in the part of his sovereign will and his sovereign grace and that every experience for which he allows us to pass is in his hands is purposeful there's a word in the the scriptures which is used a number of times patient Peter speaks of it in that outline of Christian character which he leaves before us in the first chapter of the second epistle and the word which is used there is a word which in the original language a word for which we have no exact counterpart in our English patience is but a weak translation of the word but it is a word which which speaks of a continuing a continuing endurance in the things of God and a looking or a looking

forward with with hope and with a sense of purpose in the midst of our trials which which sees the purpose of God beyond a continual purposeful endurance in the midst of our difficulties that is something of what is enshrined in in this little word which we which we can't translate patient in other words a of the of the sovereignty of God which doesn't bow down abjectly beneath our difficulties or beneath our trials but recognizes that however little we may understand of the reason why God is taking us taking taking us through certain certain circumstances this circumstance through what which God is allowing me to pass now is purposeful in his hand God has a purpose I don't understand how God is going to work out his purpose I completely fail to to see why God has brought me this way at

all there is a purpose in this God has something for me to learn God has something to say to me here and so I do not allow this trial to be simply a parenthesis in my spiritual experience and in it my only prayer is oh God take me out of this difficulty take me out of this trial but in it I I recognize thy sovereignty thou rulest thou art above all thou has brought me into these circumstances with a specific purpose what is thy purpose I want to learn I want to I want to know and there are many of us here who no doubt are passing through various trials passing through various difficulties we all have them my difficulties at the moment

may not be yours and your difficulties at the moment may not be mine but there are areas of trial no doubt which we are all experiencing and some of us

probably have come here to to this conference trusting that God will give us some word of comfort in these trials or maybe show us a way out of them and maybe when we gather together in these morning hours a temptation will be to to ask that God in some way should deliver us from the circumstances into which he has brought us but maybe what God is trying to teach us in these days is that we should look for his purpose within these circumstances and a place recognize his sovereignty that through him we should be brought into a deeper understanding of his fullness and that we should be brought to recognize that whatever the trials and whatever the difficulties are that he allows upon our lives they are all purposeful every single one of them is purposeful that no trial or no no trouble is

as ever meant by God to be as it were parenthetical within our spiritual experience but a means of bringing us into a new place of spiritual enlightenment and you understand the depth of our relationship within himself and how how often they say the very opposite is the case God brings us through brings us through this difficulty oh lord take me take me out of it God in his grace does take us out of it and all and we are concerned only with forgetting the past forgetting these few days of prior forgetting these these years of difficulties years which we didn't understand when God has had a richness for us in them which we have missed because we have failed within these that we have failed within these difficulties to recognize recognize his sovereignty to recognize his purpose how

important it is that we should recognize the sovereignty of God in seeking God to fulfill his purpose within us and in interceding also for others in interceding also for others not that we should be under concerned about others difficulties and others trials but that more than that we should be concerned about the purpose and the sovereignty of God we should be concerned that God should teach us what he wants to teach us in whatever means by whatever means he desires to employ and that within the company of God's people as a whole those for whom he has given us this burden of intercession we should be concerned likewise for them that he should have that liberty to draw them into an understanding of something his fuller purpose and his fuller aim as we were hearing yesterday evening by

whatsoever means he desires to employ but in all things we should recognize his sovereignty the sovereignty of his dealings with us and surely it is that beyond everything else that God would that it's the Lord's concern for us as he gives us this this pattern for our faith our father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name hallowed be thy name God's holiness God's character the revelation of God's character within us that Christ might be revealed within us I believe that one of the things which is most necessary in the midst of the people of God's day is an emphasis upon spiritual character oh there is much more of course also that we need but how much we need in these days spiritual character having come back to the west after this last time and absence of seven seven years one is

impressed or depressed rather at least I have been in in Great Britain I have only been in America this time at the moment for about for about a week but how much impressed or depressed I have been in in Great Britain my own country and I have seen the the the luring the luring of how standards have gone down and I'm speaking not simply of the world at the world at large the world around and of course it is true there so blatantly true and yet within the in the midst of God's people those who not simply are nominally Christian if we may if I may use that expression but those who profess to know and to love the Lord and those who give indication that they they have an experience of the grace of God that they are related to Christ yet it seems to me that standards again again they they seem

to go down and down and down and there is such a lack of concern for spiritual principles Christian principles in the outworking of our daily life in ordinary daily living in business life in the life in in business life in God's in the midst of God's people in the in the home life of God's people the upholding of ordinary Christian principles spiritual principles the manifestation of things the righteous character of God within the righteous character of our Lord Jesus Christ within it seems to me that in these days we are not sufficiently we are not sufficiently concerned and so often we on the one hand can be so concerned with a with an understanding of spiritual truth that we absolutely lose sight of the of the necessity of seeing the fact truth by the grace of God is translated into

translated into the into into our daily living that we be not simply hearers of the word but doers of the word also I say that I'm not saying anything too profound something that we all we all know and see and yet to a much greater extent I believe we God's people need to know that in our daily living in our daily living in these days the upholding of spiritual character we can be concerned with defending the faith and there are so many people seems to me in the so-called Christian Christian world who are concerned with the defense of the faith and the defense of the faith may is certainly not misplaced there is a need for a concern along that line we need also to be concerned with living out the faith which the Lord has committed to us and that too is a is a condition I believe of

effective intercession hallowed be thy name but God's name should be should be hallowed and should be should be glorified at the standard of God something of the standard of the righteousness of the holiness of God should be manifest in our own daily living but we as God's people in the ordinary daily run should hand out as those who are distinct in this world and how easy it is to be to be like everyone else not necessarily to condone everything that is done in this God rejecting world and yet while on the one hand owning our allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ at the same time to to look as like others as possible and to have more concern about well not being too different from others than we are concerned about revealing the nature and revealing the righteousness of revealing the

standard of Christ we need to be concerned about that in these days manifestation of the rightness the manifestation of something of the character of God a different a different people a peculiar people word of God says a lot about the distinction which should characterize the people of God and surely that is something of course which supremely we find exemplified in in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ he was not he did not live the the life of a hermit he was not a recluse in fact people complained about him they complained about his his mixing with others and those of course Pharisees and so on who were trying to find fault with him they called him a friend of publicans a friend of publicans and sinners and yet at the same time he could never be confused with these people he was in the

world but he could never be confused with the world the writer of the Hebrew says he was separate from sinners and in a very real sense he was separate from sinners there was that character the character of God of course within him which always stood out as something which was distinct distinctive Christ was always distinct in the midst of the world and he went to the cross to sanctify a people to make a people light unto himself and one of the the characteristic characteristics of God's people these days of us as individuals in the midst of a godless world and of the church of those who gather together as God's people should be its distinctive not as I have already said that it suggested that should be divorced from the world ever in that place ready to minister to others ready to be

channeled to the light of God to others and yet distinctive distinctive in character just as Christ that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in this world was distinct separate from sinners yet in the midst we as God's

people separated from sinners yet in the midst revealing the character of the Lord revealing the holiness of his name in our homes in our businesses in our relationships one with another in the in the fellowship of the in the fellowship of the people of God showing false faith the holiness of the Lord and if we're not concerned about that there is little point in our interceding for the purpose of God the whole of the purpose of God has to do with the revelation of his of his holiness in a world which is so unholy and if we are not concerned vitally concerned about the

revelation of the holy character of God within us in the humdrum tasks of daily living there is little point in our interceding for us little point in our prayer hallowed be thy name our father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven I think seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness all these things a life which is lived with a concern not for my will not for our will but for the will of God I am crucified of Christ said Paul Galatians nevertheless I live I am here in body yet not I but Christ liveth in me in the life which I now live I live by faith I live in the face of the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me a life where the will of the apostle Paul was lived in subjection to the will of God with

a desire for his rulership his kingdom that of course is the is the the essence of the spiritual life the essence of our whole christian life we should enter into into that realm of God dominated life at the moment when we we first come to an experience of faith in him faith is essentially the the deliverance of the will of man to the will of God the cry to him of of Lord the recognition of of his supremacy the deliverance of our desire and our will to to the coming of his kingdom and the life which is lived constantly in that city that is faith the deliverance of our will to the will of God in Christ the living of a life which is constantly desired is not so the fulfillment of our own desires but the becoming of his kingdom of his supremacy his rulership his purpose thy kingdom come thy

will be done in earth as it is in heaven in the place of your greatest supremacy where everything is done as you desire it to be done may that be so in my life in the sphere of our fellowship there's not much of the will of God being done here upon the earth the sphere in a sense at the moment of the of the will of man although the Lord in his supremacy of course dominates dominating that but as in that sphere where there is absolutely no opposition at all to your will may that be the sphere in which in which I live the sphere of my the sphere of my kingdom may that be our prayer and I will be done in earth as it is in heaven and then give us this day our daily bread well here we are a long way from a long way from the beginning and yet so often our lives of prayer are firstly concerned

with concerned with these two Lord give me this Lord give me that as the children ask for God expects us of course to to grow up in our in our lives of prayer and our lives of intercession and if we get to know God at all when we know God at all we know that he's we know he's concerned about about these things so concerned about these things that in fact we don't really need to ask for us to look first of all for the kingdom seek you first the kingdom of God and his and his righteousness and all these things shall be added up all your material circumstance all your material needs they will all be provided by me in such a way that I will work out my foolish purpose for them and really you don't need to be troubled with them let your concern be upon me and forgive us our debts as we forgive

our debtors just one word do we ever pray to God for consideration maybe which we ourselves are not are not willing to give to others we expect the grace of God so often in a measure that we are not willing to show of grace to our brothers and our sisters in the law we expect to be ministered unto by God but we ourselves have not yet reached that place where to any extent we are ready to to minister to the people of

God and we are ready to minister to the world to the world about our lives for Christ the purposeful God has placed us here with a purpose purpose of knowing him and the purpose also of of witness manifesting his his glory his righteousness his character we must be concerned about that purpose we must be concerned about exercising that purpose to the extent we are ready and

that we are willing to accept our responsibility before God in this world in whatever sphere he has placed led us to that extent ask God to discard his responsibility there's much more that we could say about these verses but surely there is there is much within them which would help us in our ministry of prayer our ministry of ministry.

Just a little bit briefly of Acts chapter 4 because I feel that there is in this prayer meeting this early prayer meeting of the church something of an outworking of some of these principles which we have which we have seen in in in in Matthew chapter in Matthew chapter 6. We are not to take this as being an account of everything that took place in that early prayer meeting I have no doubt that this meeting of the people of God went on for much longer than it it takes to read the these few verses which we read together a little while ago that there was much more said to God was much more said to one another than we have here and yet probably we have outlined here as there has been left for us by the by the spirit of God in his grace that which is is most essential and is most instructive for us.

The church was founded it was established in persecution it had its foundation in suffering and of course the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles give us an account of some of the sufferings which the people of God underwent during the first days and months the first year or so of the after the after Pentecost after the establishing of the church here upon the earth.

Peter and John had been arrested they had been questioned they had been released and being let go they went to their own company they gathered together with the other children of God and they reported all that the chief priest and the elders had said unto them and then they begin to pray and the substance of their prayers was again I say so different from that which it would have been natural for so many people of God to pray in these days if we had been in the circumstances which Peter and John found themselves in what would have been almost automatically the substance of some of our prayer well some of God's people would have come with a question Lord why have you allowed us to suffer like this we have followed thee we have served thee as far as we know how we have trusted thee we want

to we want to live for thee we want to obey thee we want to witness for thee and now we're in trouble why and yet in these verses there is no suggestion such a question our prayer might have been Lord we have suffered it's enough Lord take this suffering away from us take us out of these difficulties that is the most probably the most likely request that we would have brought we would have brought to the Lord and yet there is no suggestion of request of that nature at all in fact the implications are here that the disciples were not at all surprised that they were suffering in fact the suggestion here is that had they not been suffering had they not been allowed to undergo these difficulties they would have been more surprised than they were having been having had to pass through these

various trials and they they quote the words of David they quote the Old Testament scripture as an indication that the people of God are to expect things such as these the mouth of thy servant has said why did the heathen rage and these people imagine imagine these things and the kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord against his Christ for are the truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed with heaven and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of

Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done of course these things are going to happen and of course there's going to be trial of course there's going to be trouble of course we're going to have all these difficulties

God is trying to work out his purposes thou art working out thy purposes and if thou art working out thy purposes there's going to be no opposition to that all the forces of this earth and the forces of hell and hell are going to be arrayed against the purposes of God and of course there's going to be going to be opposition there's a lot said about the warfare within which we are engaged and warfare means trouble warfare means trial it means suffering and if we ask ourselves if our concern is that we should be taken out of the trials which the Lord allows us to pass through I wonder if we are asking at the same time to be delivered from our part in the the spiritual battle the spiritual warfare which is an intrinsic part of all our of all spiritual life is an intrinsic part of our life in

Christ an essential part of our life and the people of God here did not ask for that they accepted it and in it all as we have seen in Matthew 6 they recognized the sovereignty of God for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done these sufferings and these trials through which they had passed were all purposeful in the hand in the hands of God God had a purpose for purpose in them all he was sovereign he was ruled he was with them in all recognition of the sovereignty of God and one request one request and it was not a request for release from their difficulties it was a request that with boldness they may speak thy word with boldness they may speak thy word a request that in the midst of these trials they should be faced whether there be a lull of the storm

or whether the storm be roaring with us Lord grant that we may be faithful grant that we may know thy sovereign will and whatsoever in whatsoever way thou dost lead us grant that we may always recognize thy sovereign will in the midst of our difficulties and grant that we may be faithful and of course the Lord answered that prayer faithfulness and boldness to be those who should manifest something of his character for there are as i see them some of the the principles of prayer principles of this as ministry of intercession beyond everything else as we gather together in the mornings of this of this week let our concern be beyond ourselves beyond our own immediate needs the material physical our own trials our own circumstances let our hearts and our minds go out to the Lord so we're

concerned with him with his purpose his glory in us and in his people let us recognize his poverty in our lives and our circumstances and let us constantly keep before us as we engage in this ministry of intercession the responsibility which is which is which is our know God live for him walk in his way the responsibility of revealing his holiness of being those who manifest something of his of his character who are willing not only to know what he wants and to understand what he wants but also by his grace and by his power to do what he wants and when the requiem we come before him in in that attitude we are ready to pray we are ready to intercede effectively and in such a way as the Lord will the Lord will answer us when we are concerned with with his glory the Lord will reveal his

glory and out of his grace and out of his power as we seek first his people he will add all the other little things which we need he will add them all

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