

True Prayer Desires Specific Answers

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of deep desire and specificity in prayer, drawing insights from the stories of the blind man in Luke 18 and the crippled man in John 5. It highlights the need for passionate faith that desires God's intervention and the significance of being specific in prayer requests. The message encourages believers to have a fervent longing for God's work in their lives and to boldly ask for specific needs, trusting in God's ability to answer according to their faith.

Scripture: Luke 18:35, John 5:1, Matthew 7:7, John 15:7, James 1:6, Philippians 4:6, Mark 11:24, Hebrews 11:6, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Passionate Prayer", "Specific Requests in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

I truly feel thankful for every time I have the privilege of preaching or teaching God's Word. I live with the sense of any one of them could be my last one, and usually men never know when their last one will be. So this is a treasure to me.

I'd rather be right here with you this morning doing this than anything else I can think of. So I counted a privilege and a treasure every time. I was struck this week by Jesus' words to individuals.

It was very specific and very pointed concerning desire. How much desire do we have for God's blessing, and how specifically do we get down to crying out to God for His blessing? So we're going to look at two passages in the Gospels. The first is in Luke 18, and the second will be in John 5 in a moment.

Luke 18 beginning about verse 35. You have this familiar story of Jesus is coming near Jericho, and you'll see in verse 35, there was a certain blind man, a specific individual. That's important.

A certain blind man sat by the road begging, and hearing a multitude, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Well, that erupted in his heart passion, courage to cry out.

And he did cry out. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Then people told him to be quiet.

Verse 39. What did he do in response? He cried out all the more. Son of David, have mercy on me.

So Jesus stops. Picture it now. He stops.

There's a multitude. There's a big crowd. He stops, and he tells them to bring the man to him.

And when he had come near, he asked him. Here's the text. What do you want me to do for you? I remember twice he was crying out for mercy.

Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, here's what I want. That I may see. That I could receive my sight.

And Jesus gave him his sight. End of story. Beginning of sight and vision and joy for that man.

But notice Jesus' words. What do you want me to do for you? Be what? Specific. John 5. Beginning of the chapter.

Here you have Feast of the Jews. Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. There's this pool of Bethesda.

Notice verse 3. In these lay a great multitude of sick people. In Luke 18, there was a multitude, a big crowd, but the one man. Here you have a great multitude of sick people.

But look at verse 5. Now a certain man, the crowd, dying humanity, many faces impersonal, but the beggar, the one person, gets Jesus' attention. Jesus deals with him. Here again, great multitude of sick people in this tradition of coming, laying by the pool, with this probably false view that if an angel might come down and stir the waters, whoever gets in the water first will be healed.

That's the context. But verse 5. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity for 38 years. Anybody here 38 years old? Jason Courtney.

All his life, this man, apparently. At least if he was older than 38, he had this 38 years. It was a life where he was an invalid, laying there.

Jesus sees him. Now notice verse 6. Jesus sees him and knew that he had already been in that condition a long time, and Jesus speaks to him. Now the man wasn't crying out.

He was minding his own business. Jesus totally initiates this and said to him what? He didn't say, what do you want me to do for you? He said, do you want to get well? Literally, do you choose to be made whole? Do you will this? Do you really want this? Would you really like to be made well? Well the man, he didn't know Jesus was going to say this. Then he has his reasons or his excuses.

Well, nobody helps me get into the pool. Somebody is always in front of me, so that's my answer. And Jesus then says these powerful, life-giving words, the Spirit of God, through the words of Jesus Christ, rise, take up your bed and walk.

And immediately the man's healed. But the question that preceded it was, do you really want to be made whole? And we don't even see any faith from this man. We don't see even an answer that says, yes, I long for this.

The man gives an answer that's almost neutral. It's an excuse or a reason, but that's all that Jesus needs. So I want us to think about this morning.

How specifically, how specific we get with God when we long for Him to work? How specific do we get? And what do we want? What would we have Him do for us? This especially applies to the Christian walking by faith. Now let's remember, everything is of grace in the Christian life, from the beginning to the end. Grace predestinates us to become a child of God.

The Spirit of God works through grace throughout the whole Christian life. God elects, because of grace, the Holy Spirit draws us and lay holds on us on the basis of free, pure grace. Nothing about us has caused it.

He regenerates us by grace. It's grace that grants us repentance and faith. It's grace that raises the dead to life, the sinner, out of the dunghill, out of the miry clay, out of their trespasses and sins.

Grace comes to us outside of ourselves and brings life, and then we begin this living journey. Then begins something. We then, as Paul said, we work out our salvation.

How? With fear and trembling. That means believers having a new heart with a new life, they diligently deal with the themes of the Christian life, and they begin to work out and walk in speaking in attitudes and motives in how they relate to others. They work out all this salvation increasingly in the fear of God, in carefulness of soul.

They work it out with fear and trembling, because who's doing it? It is God who is at work in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure. So it is God who is at work in us, producing faith to become Christ-like and fruitful, and it's all of grace. But once we're in Christ, it's God working, and it's you working, both.

Truly God at work in us, and truly you at work in your life, cooperating with, if you will, working hand in hand with God's grace in you, you are working as well. God is works, and we fully work, and we work, and God is working, and there's no conflict between these two. And in terms of our walk as a believer, the supremely important work and responsibility for you and I as a believer is what? The most essential and critical aspect for the believer to walk in is what? Faith.

That's right. Someone might say, well, love. Well, we only come to know the love of God, and we only walk in love as we walk in faith.

We can't receive anything except that we receive it through faith initially, our salvation, and as we live by faith, the just shall live by faith, so we walk in faith. We aren't justified by love. We're justified by faith.

Jesus didn't say, according to your love be it unto you. He said, according to your faith be it unto you. He didn't say, if you have love is a grain of mustard seed.

No. If you have faith, even the tiniest reality of true faith, you can move mountains. The promises of God are for those who will believe them.

Promises lying dusty in your Bible, unused, unprayed, unbelieved, unappropriated. Work out your salvation with trembling, fear and trembling, through actions of genuine faith. I'm trusting in the living God.

Yesterday morning, early, I read in the Psalms where the psalmist said, the Lord has been mindful of us. He will bless us. And right before that it says, O Israel, trust in the Lord.

And so I stopped and I told the Lord, Lord today, I'm just saying, my trust is in you. I'm trusting you. I believe you.

I am depending on you. We live by faith. So faith is what receives from the Lord.

According to your faith, Jesus said, be it unto you. So dear ones, my question today is, what do we really want Christ to do for us in these days in our life and as a church and in the kingdom? He would say, what do you want me to do for you? And he would say to some of us who are burdened about things, we need changes in our life. We need provision.

He would say, like he did to that needy man, do you want to be made whole? Do you really, truly, deeply desire this? Do you have this deep desire in your soul for God to do that which you're praying for? Or is your prayer a dead ritual? Jesus asked these significant questions to both men. And remember, we talked about the multitude and the one. Both contexts, this is not without significance because Christ, with the multitude there passing by, and he stopped for the certain man, who's doing what? Crying out, desperately, longing, courageously.

It's as if he is not going to let anything keep him back from getting mercy. A multitude of people, a big crowd, and in the midst of the multitude, John 5 says, now a certain man. From the crowd to the one.

Jesus always zeroed in on the one. There's a big crowd. Jesus is passing by, and he stops and looks up, Zacchaeus, I'm going to your house today.

Crowd to one. Jesus leaves Capernaum, crossing the sea, stills the storm, because who's waiting on the other side of the lake? A lone demoniac who needs deliverance. From the crowd on the other side of the lake to the one.

Remember he said to the disciples, and it was really politically incorrect, we have to go through Samaria. What? Yeah, what's waiting in Samaria for him? A woman at the well. He was going to save.

Jesus, I love this in in John 2, end of John 2, Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew all men, and he knew what was in man. In John 3 starts, now there was a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews who came by night. From the crowd, from dying humanity, always to the one, to the individual.

And Christ looks at his church today, and he shepherds the whole flock of God universally, and he cares for every church corporately. But you know what? He's looking at the one. What do you want from me? Do you really want this from me? Be specific.

Do you deeply desire it? So I want to just briefly give this little cameos of of the man in in Luke 18, the cripple, and then John 5, and then we're going to take these two questions. Jesus has him apply them to us for us to answer this question. Do I really passionately desire, when I pray, do I passionately desire for God to do those things? Or am I just mouthing words in prayer? And secondly, what do we really specifically want him to do for us? The man in Luke 18, a cripple, 38 years, he knew about Jesus, and he has this radical, intense faith that wasn't going to be denied.

One passionate focus, the Lord Jesus Christ and his own need. The man in John 5 was different. Blind, destitute, one of the poorest and neediest people in society were the street people who were lame, who were blind, and they were just beggars.

That was their daily chore to somehow get to where they could beg, and they were there. A street beggar. This guy knows nothing about who Jesus is.

He's sitting there minding his own business. He's not aware. And then Jesus initiates everything with a question to him.

And you'd think it didn't need to be asked. Sir, would you like your condition truly changed? If you've dealt with street people much at all, sometimes you've come to find out they're kind of comfortable in their scenario. They don't really want help.

Now, there's a few among them that do, but we've seen people offered all kinds of help, and they became nitpicky about it, critical about it, demanding about it, and you couldn't help them. So this man, Jesus asked him the question. He'd been in this condition for decades.

He's probably used to his routine, and he asked him, do you really want to be made whole? What's that going to mean for him? Scary, right? It's going to change everything, get him out of his comfort zone, take him into the unknown. Jesus asked him this pointed question, do you really want to be made whole? Well, what these two men had in common, the blind man and the crippled man, both very needy, both in a desperate human condition that no one could change, both a candidate for grace, both singled out by the Lord Jesus Christ for transformation, the individual in the great need. Do you really want great answers from God? And what do you want specifically? So my goal here this morning is we're looking into the nature of faith.

You might call it what characterizes true faith? We've all got to walk by faith. You have to believe God for things in your future to see them come to pass. It's not automatic.

We have to walk by faith and live by faith. We have to claim the promises of God in prayer. We have to lay hold of things he wants to give us and answer, but we must ask.

And what that asking comes from within seriousness, passion, real desire to have what we're asking from him. Half-hearted people in the kingdom won't get much. So let's think about these two things that characterize faith from these two men.

First, faith really desires before God for him to work. Desire rises up. Jesus asks the question, do you want this? The guy either wants it truly or he doesn't.

Desire, when we're in need, when we're facing mountains that need to be moved, desire must rise up within us out of the need, out of our impotence and our helplessness. Desire has to rise up within us. Faith begins there when in our great need and longing for help we feel desire in our souls for God to work.

We're even told by Jesus to desire. Remember what he said, John 15, whatever things you desire when you pray. Look, brethren, to go deeper in prayer, to see more answers, you bring deeper levels of real desire because Jesus initiates this with the guy and he says it to the disciples and us.

What do you desire? Whatever things you desire when you pray. The desire has got to be there. You want to be married? How much are you praying for that with real desire regularly? You just apply it in your situation.

Desire arises and it's the word there, desire, in John 15 is amazing. It's literally the idea of craving something. Same idea of blessed are those who hunger and thirst after rations.

It's an acute craving. It's an acute thirst. In prayer, how real is our desire for what we're praying for? How much desire do we have on the real things we're praying for? Is it half-hearted? Do we really want this? Do we seriously want this need to change, this need to be met? Faith desires answers in prayer.

Faith is filled with desire for an answer from God, which like the the first man, when he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, you couldn't hold him back. Faith was passionate, crying out all the more and Jesus responded to faith. He will respond to an individual's passionate faith.

How much you got? In one very real sense, Jesus initiates the question so he's waiting for those who will believe him more for great things that only he can do. Call unto me and I will answer you and show you what? Great and mighty things which you know not. Some of us haven't received things that God has for us because we don't desire and become passionate enough to stay at prayer and seriously cry out.

We're nonchalant in prayer. We're half-hearted. We act like Catholics.

We do our little prayer ritual. Heart's not in it. No feeling.

No nothing bubbling up within us. It says, oh God, here I long for this. Please do this.

Answer me according to your mercy. Lord, I want you to answer this. Do we pray that way with desire? Faith must be filled which is our you and I wanting, wanting an answer from God and Jesus initiates this.

Do you want to be whole? Do you want this to change? Do you want a full specific answer? So faith desires. First of all, that's what we see here. Secondly, the second characteristic, specificity.

I think I got it. Meaning, faith gets specific. How do you know if God's answered if you say, Lord, save the world.

Lord, bless your people everywhere. Lord, help my family. Jesus said to the the blind man, what do you want me to do for you? He says that to us too.

Whatsoever things you ask in prayer, believing. And the man, he got specific. Lord, I want to see.

That's it. You've asked me. Here's what I want.

I want to see. And he got it. Specific request.

Very clear, straightforward, honest, bottom line. Jesus shows this to us here. He calls us to greater faith by saying, what do you, what do you want me to do for you? Be specific, be real and ask.

Jesus took this man there and he takes us there. He's drawing out of us not only to increase our desire, but to get real, to get specific. And you keep asking God specifically until he answers.

This is why Jesus used this language. Ask me anything and I will do it. He wasn't talking about broadly.

He was talking about focus. Ask me anything. What do you want for him to do for you that would glorify him? Get specific.

Tell him exactly. He said, whatsoever things you ask, what things are we asking? Move from the general to the specific in prayer. Tuesday some of us gathered for a half day of prayer.

We do this once a month. So if any of you men, it's generally brothers, if you ever want to join that, it's generally the first Tuesday of the month. Just see me about it and you can get on the list.

But Tuesday, Tim Conway joined us from England on Zoom. And at the beginning of the prayer time, it was three in the afternoon his time. He said, brothers, would y'all pray for me? I've had a horrible migraine all day and I just need prayer.

He has this history of that. So you can pray for him, for God to relieve him of that. But so we stopped the direction we were going and we got specific.

Every man in the room took a turn praying for one thing. Lord, touch him of this headache. Lord, relieve him.

Heal him. Remove this headache. And at the end of the prayer time, he told me, he told us, I just want you to know, when one of you began to pray specifically, my headache vanished.

It was all gone. Asking specifically. Jesus is saying to us, look, you tell me exactly what you want.

Exactly how you feel about it. Exactly, specifically what you want. But some of us don't have the courage to get that specific with God.

We want to be general. Maybe it's a lack of faith. Maybe it's unbelief.

But faith rises and says, my Savior has invited me to be specific. He's invited me to come with desire. And I'm going to get specific in prayer about the things I want him to do.

What if he doesn't do it? That's his business. He will answer. Our job is to pray that way.

His job is to answer. Those of y'all in our church who are on the Signal app. Wednesday night, we prayed for a young lady from Plano, or in Dallas, Jillian.

A young woman, a daughter of her dad, Phil and Ann Brown. And she has been, she's very special needs. And she, I don't think she can hear well, can't communicate, and in real serious physical need, and desperate need.

And so I told Phil Wednesday, I'll send this to our church, our prayer meetings, and we will pray specifically. And I believe all our prayer meetings did pray for specifically. Friday, he calls me and he said, you just won't believe it.

She's at a total turnaround. She's off the severe medicine as of this morning. And she's responding to us.

Everything is different. And they're putting her in a normal room. Brethren, we don't believe God enough.

It's not that we we ask God for too much. It's that our lack of faith, our lack of seriousness and desire in getting real with God in prayer. We ask too little.

We just ask too little. Faith prays very specifically. The Lord Jesus says to us this morning, the things you're burdened for, that you long for, that are in your life, that need to change.

He says to us, what do you want me to do for you? Now those who learn that lesson and believe it, and they take this reality of deeper desire, and really laser focus on specific things to God in prayer, they're going to see answers they hadn't been seeing. The individual blind man, the individual cripple, they were this way, and Christ answered specifically. So answer the one question this morning.

What's the greatest thing that would glorify God in your life, in your family's life, right now, that you would want Him to do? Everybody's got an answer. Remember in 2 Kings, Elisha is dying. The Bible says, Elisha was sick with the sickness by which he would die.

Elisha's final act of ministry was to Joash the king, and they were going to have to try to conquer the enemy. And remember what Elisha said to Joash? Take a bow and some arrows. He told him to shoot one, and he did.

And then he told him, strike the ground, strike the ground with the other arrows. And how many times did Joash strike the ground? Three times. Elisha was grieved, and became angry really, and he said, you should have struck six times, and then God would have dealt with the enemy more thoroughly.

Half-hearted faith, it doesn't passionately act. Passion and seriousness, and taking the prophethood of his word seriously, he would have struck more than three casual times. Brethren, we're half-hearted too often, and thus we have not the cause.

We ask not properly. Praying and acting in faith, half the way we could and should. How much more should we be asking? But are we desirous enough? Are we serious enough? Are we specific enough? Strike the ground three times, no, in prayer, in these days, with what you desire, and what you do not need specifically.

Strike the ground six, twelve, eighteen, thirty-six, a hundred times. Keep striking, because out of the heart proceed the issues of life and faith. How much more will your Father give good things to those who ask him? Matthew says, faith desires passionately for prayer to be answered, for needs to be met.

Faith gets specific and never stops asking for exactly what is in your heart. So this morning, brethren, do we want to be made whole? That speaks to seriousness and desire. Do we want this situation to be made whole? Lord, have mercy on me.

What do you want me to do for you? Lord, increase our faith. Faith, a believer, that learns to walk with God deeply in faith daily, abiding in Christ, feeding on, pleading, appropriating the promises of God with deeper desire, with more specific faith, are going to see God do greater and greater things. And I'm not talking about how quick or the timing.

No, that's in God's business. We know that. But Jesus did say, according to your faith, be it unto you.

He meant it, and he says that to us today. Let's pray. Father, we know that it's grace that has saved us, and it's grace that works in us to will and to do the Father's good pleasure.

But we also know, Father, you've told us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to grow in faith, to believe you, and to be able to respond, Lord, in our hearts rightly to these questions. Do you truly want to be made whole? What do you want me to do for you? Lord, apply this to our hearts and work deeply in us. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

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