

Pray and Not Lose Heart

by Paul Washer

God's salvation is not just about what He does for us, but about who He is and what He has done for us through Christ, and He desires to demonstrate His goodness in our lives.

Duration: 1:05:23

Scripture: Genesis 2:16-17, Psalm 84:11, Isaiah 62:5, Jeremiah 32:40, Luke 18:1, John 19:30, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Persistent Prayer", "Satanic Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the limitations of a brief encounter with people at a conference and expresses a desire for a conference solely focused on fellowship. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about a frustrating encounter with someone that led to a moment of revelation from God. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of prayer and references Luke 18:1, emphasizing the need to pray continually and not lose heart. The speaker also highlights the deceptive nature of Satan, who portrays himself as an advocate but ultimately seeks to accuse and deceive.

Transcript

That is not orientated in the direction it ought to be. Speak about so many things, oftentimes we're so materialistic or we show ourselves to be so materialistic when we speak about heaven, speaking about streets of gold and gates of pearl and getting all excited about things you walk on and swing on. The fact of the matter is heaven is glorious because of Christ.

But he also wants you to know that heaven is glorious because of his people, because of not what they are inherently by themselves, but what he has made them to be. And it's just, if anyone were to ask me, you know, they say, well, such and such a thing is a touch of heaven on earth. I would say the closest thing to a touch of heaven on earth is the fellowship of God's people.

And there is so much that he has done in our lives. And one of the saddest things of a meeting like this is that you only touch the surface, you only touch the surface of the lives of even people that you spend a few minutes with. And then most people you can't even do that.

I think that it would be a good thing one day to just have a conference of fellowship. What are you going to do? Well, we're just going to hang out together for three days. Well, are you going to listen to great preaching? No, we're just going to hang out together for three days.

Well, what about preaching? We do that a lot, but we're just going to hang out together for three days. Listen to each other's testimonies and talk about Christ. I've met so many people here even this weekend that I've never met.

It's been such a great joy. I've spent a lot of time with old brother Luke back there, just talking about so many things. You really need to pray for him.

He has gone through some things that few men, he's gone through something in particular that few men could ever endure and survive. And I've been praying for him. I mean, this year his wife started hunting and she killed a bigger deer than he did.

I know few men who could survive a trial like that. So pray for him. Pray for him also because I plan to go to Iowa and have no mercy on him either.

But I'll tell you, I know it seems to be running on, but cherish moments like these. Cherish times like these. Cherish being able to be brought into the presence of another believer in whom dwells the Christ.

It is such a great privilege. Today, I don't even know where to begin. I want to talk about prayer, but then in order to talk about prayer, there are other things that you have to understand.

And in order to talk about those things, there are other things that you must understand. If I were to address anyone, address my own son about prayer, I couldn't go on to the things of prayer until one seed was solidly sown in his heart. And that is this, God is good.

God is good. Now I know you say, ok, let's go on now, let's learn some things about God. No, you could spend an eternity just trying to understand that God is good.

And the way I see most believers live, even those that are very pious, much more devoted than I am, the lack of joy and the lack of believing that God is for them, they are so mesmerized by their own failure that they don't even see that's not even the point. Are you expecting one day to be swallowed up in the fact that you finally know how to live the Christian life? Are you expecting one day to draw all your confidence from the fact that finally you're able to dot every i and cross every t? I mean, what are you expecting? To one day arrive and then come into this great joy? You're never going to arrive and therefore you're never going to come into this great joy, because the great joy doesn't come from that. It is not your continuous work for God, but Christ's finished work for you.

And that is what you must understand. I want us to look for just a moment. We're going to hop all around today.

I want you to go to Ephesians for a moment, chapter 2. In talking about prayer and talking about the goodness of God, there's something I would like to say. Sometimes, you know, if we were to speak with a doctor, Dr. Berry or just any physician, do you realize that he would know much more about my wife than I do? Do you realize that? A physician could sit down and tell me things about my wife that I never knew, with regard to how her heart works and how her muscles contract and expand and all the different things about how her body works. He knows more about my wife than I do, than I ever will.

He can grasp concepts about my wife that are so far beyond my tiny mind that I'll never be able to know them. But he doesn't know my wife like I know my wife. It's the same thing in everything about God.

Especially for the young theologian. You need to understand this. You may be able to quote the Westminster.

You may understand the Greek and the Hebrew. And you may read so many books. But do you know him? You may be able to analyze him, but do you walk with him? Do you know him? Sometimes we're so concerned about knowing all this stuff that we're like the difference between a scientist and a child.

My little boy Ian, for example. I mean, the kid could pass out from excitement by looking at a white wall. You know, and you stand there and you have this scientist and he's looking at a sunset and he's explaining how the light reflects and all these different things and why these colors occur and why this happens and what exactly the tilt of the earth and the clouds and the atmosphere and everything.

And my little boy is just looking at him like, but the colors! He wants an explanation. The little boy just wants to look at the colors. Just wants to see the beauty.

Just wants to wonder how God painted such a thing. From where did He get the paint? And what was His brush? It's the same way in so many things about God. You want to know this.

You want to know that. How do you pray? How do you study? How do you do all these things? But the thing that you most need to do is just look and go, Whoa! Just look at Him. There's such a difference between knowing truth and knowing God.

Now, knowing truth is a means. It's part of the journey. It's essential.

It's foundational. But it's not the whole thing. It's not the whole thing.

And that is why a little old woman in Romania, who can barely read the Bible, can experience more of the workings and the truth of God than a man who can read it backwards and forwards in the original language. Now, when we look at Ephesians chapter 2, we understand something extremely important. Why has God saved you? You know, I've heard people say, Well, God has saved you to serve.

Did He have a need? And if He did have a need, couldn't He have found somebody better than you? Well, first of all, He doesn't have a need. And yes, He could have found somebody better than you and better than me. So, Him saving us to serve, I think, is pretty much out of the question.

Now, we need to serve, but that's not the purpose for which He saved us. It's not like God has a need. Why has He saved us? Has He saved us so that we would love Him? Well, again, did He need to be loved? Did He save us so that somehow we would so love Him? And if we do so love Him, who is being exalted? God or us? Is our love to be the topic of the thing of the Christian life? So, no, He didn't save us just to love Him.

Why did He save us? If you look in Ephesians chapter 2, going down through there beginning in verse 1, talking about us being dead in our trespasses and sins, and all the heinous crimes we committed in verses 2 and 3, and we get to 4 and it says, but God. I have a sign in my office. It's quilted and it's in a frame.

It just has two words. But God. And every time there's a trial, every time there's a weakness of mind that prevails, every time I stumble and fall, every time I don't know what I'm going to do because things I've already done that were wrong, I look up and I see those two words, but God.

And that's all I need. That's all I need. And He goes, but God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved and raised up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Why? Why has He done all these things? So that in the ages to come, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Why has God saved you? He has saved you to make a demonstration out of you. He has saved you to demonstrate something about Himself.

Now, let's just imagine for a moment, Bill Gates gets a lot of bad publicity. Everyone's always talking bad about Bill Gates. I mean, after all, you get \$100 billion and there's going to be people who are jealous.

And like all men, he has his faults. But let's say that Bill Gates has some terrible publicity lately. People talking about him, saying he's unkind and cruel and all sorts of things.

So he decides, look, I've got to give the world a demonstration of how good I am. So I'm going to find the lowliest person on the face of the earth that I can find. Picks one of you college students.

And he says, I am going to do nothing but lavish upon them absolutely the full extent of all my wealth. Would any of you like to be volunteers? And you see, here's the thing, the lowlier you are and the least you deserve, the less you deserve, the more magnified He is in being good to you. Do you see that? Jesus even gave us the principle, I mean, if you love someone who loves you back, I mean, what glory is in that? If you treat those kind who treat you kind, what glory is there in that? I mean, how do you show unconditional love? There's only one way.

You show it upon the one who meets none of the conditions. This has never been about you meeting the conditions so that somehow God would love you. It's always been about God glorifying Himself by loving you unconditionally, you who meet none of the conditions.

Do you see that? I see Christians all the time, and they're in this thing even though they would not say it, if you look at their life, they're in this thing of somehow being worthy of something. And that's not what Christianity is about. Now, back up for a moment, and I will say this, the teaching that I'm going to give today, the carnal, unconverted, wicked church member will listen to it and go, man, I can just keep on sinning and keep on walking in ungodliness and God's going to bless me.

But the true Christian, the true believer, will hear these things and say, if these things are so, I want so much to be for Him. I want so much to serve Him. I want so much to be a blessing and a pleasure to Him.

And we look at this passage, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace. What is grace? Unmerited favor. So He has saved you so that He could show principalities and powers and might and dominions, every created thing in heaven and on earth and in hell.

He has saved you for one purpose. To lavish upon you all that is His. All of His love.

All of His loving kindness. All of His goodness throughout all of eternity upon you, so that every creature that turns a glance toward you can only fall down on their face and worship God for His goodness. Folks, if you're a Christian, you've got a pretty good future ahead of you.

Perspectives are very, very good for you. All the very reputation of the glory of God, which He is so concerned about, He is giving a demonstration. Now, let me give you another example.

Let's say that you have an ailment of the heart. You need a heart transplant. There's no one available.

And so I march up there to the hospital and I say, look, I'm willing to die. Take my heart. Give it to the young man.

And they say, okay. Alright. Put me out there on the table.

They take out my heart. I pass away. They put my healthy heart in you and you live.

The next morning, the newspapers. About whom are they going to be speaking? Are they going to be talking about you? Are they going to be talking about how wonderful you are? Are they going to be talking about how just absolutely special you are? Are they going to be raving about your moral character? Are they going to be talking good things about you? Are they going to be amazed with you? No. They're going to be amazed with me.

They're going to be awestruck about me because I'm the one who gave it. It's not the one who receives the gift that gains the glory. It's the one who gives the gift to the one who does not deserve it.

And that's what this is about. I hear people all the time saying, well, I just want my life to glorify God. I just want my life to glorify God.

And there is a sense, a very important sense in which we are to live our life to the glory of God whether we eat or drink, do the most menial task. It is unto the glory of God. But that is not the primary way in which God is glorified in you.

God is not worshipped and God is not adored and creatures do not stand in awe of God because of what you do for Him. They stand in awe of God because of what He does for you. And that is one of the greatest and most important truths behind all praying.

Now, I want us to go for a moment to Jeremiah. Let's go to Jeremiah 33 for just a moment. Now in verse 40, talking about the New Covenant, he says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good.

And I will put the fear of me in their hearts so that they will not turn away. Now I want you to look at something here. He's made an everlasting covenant with them not only not to turn away from His people, but He's made an everlasting covenant, an unending promise to do them good.

I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt in my mind that our Master withholds no good thing from His people. Our Master withholds no good thing from His people. And He has made a covenant.

He has made an everlasting promise to do you good. Now, I want us to stop there for a moment because this type of language sometimes makes us almost think that God is, alright, I've entered into this covenant with you and I'm going to do you good because I don't break my promises. I mean, if it wasn't for this covenant, you'd be history.

But now I've entered into this covenant and I don't break my promises and yeah, you're a rat, and yeah, you stink, and yeah, you don't deserve anything from me, but I've entered into a covenant and I'm going to

keep my promise. But look at the next text. I'm sorry, chapter 32.

Look at the next text. Verse 41. And I will rejoice over them to do them good.

I will rejoice over them to do them good. So it is not what some people... I mean, we would never say these things, but if you look at the way we live and if you look at our attitudes and you look at our lack of joy, and we look at the way we grumble before God and the things we say about ourselves, we're almost like, well, you know, praise God, even though I'm a stinking, rotten, wretched stink in the nostrils of God, He's made a covenant to do me good and He'll do it because He doesn't fail in His promises. That's not what He says.

He says, I will rejoice over you to do you good. Now why is that? It's because of what we talked about last night, you see. When Christ died, right before He died, He said, it is finished.

What is finished? Sin is finished. Enmity with God is finished. It's finished.

The work of reconciliation, it is finished. You see, when you doubt these things, you're not doubting your own goodness. You shouldn't have been trusting in your own goodness to start off with.

What you're doubting in is the power of the cross. The power of the cross put away all your sin. But not only that, through the perfect life of Jesus Christ, His perfect death on the tree, His resurrection from the dead, not only have you been forgiven, but the righteousness of Christ has been given to you.

You're standing before God is always right. And you say, but how can that be? Because look what I've done even after being a Christian. Don't you understand? It's not about you.

It's about Him. It's about His work on the cross. He always sees you now as His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

And He rejoices over His people to do them good. If I had to look at most Christians, even true Christians' lives, and write a hymn based on their life, it would be something like this. You are God and I'm a worm.

Step on me and watch me squirm. I mean, it's just like... And so many people have this type of attitude and they have it thinking they're being humble when in fact what they're doing is casting doubt upon the perfect work of God in Christ. Part of boldness.

Now again, a carnal, unconverted person will take this and twist it. But part of boldness is going, yes, I can stand in His presence. Yes, I can enter in where angels fear to tread.

And then when the devil rises up and says, but you're not... Listen, we've been through that before. This is not about the younger brother. This is not about the younger sister.

This is about the elder brother who is not ashamed to call us his brothers and his sisters. This is about Him. He says, well, the Christian is the only person that can say, the only person that can honestly say they're going to heaven and can stand in the presence of God without being proud.

Because their entire standing and their entire entering in is based on the virtue and the merit of another. And so when we feel as though we can't enter in, when we feel as though He does not love us, when we begin to think this way, we're not being humble. We are saying the cross has no power.

That the work is not finished. When we say that God is not pleased with us, what we're really saying is God was not pleased with Him. The work is perfect, or it's not perfect at all.

The work paid for everything, or it paid for nothing. It says He'll no longer count our sin. My friend, what do you think that means? If you have one sin, you go to hell.

He doesn't have to count very long. Just one sin. But all of them have been removed through Christ.

So there is a boldness, a holy boldness, a joyful boldness to just enter in. Why? Because of Him. Because of Him.

It's the one who enters in and thinks they can enter in because of some righteous deed in themselves that do violence to the truth of Christianity. But you're not that way, are you? Haven't you learned that you stand upon Christ alone or you stand upon nothing? And if you stand upon Christ alone, tis enough. Tis enough.

Look at this passage. He says not only that He's made a covenant to do His people good, but look at, and I want to use a word here very loosely, look at the attitude of God. Or the disposition of God in doing His people good.

Look what He says. He says, verse 41 of chapter 32, I will rejoice over them to do them good. Do you see that? Now, this is the language of a bridegroom with his bride.

This is the language... A lot of you young guys aren't married, but about the happiest moment of your life is going to be after you get married. The fact that you've entered into a relationship with... You're just so excited. You run into a wall.

You run into a wall. You don't even know what to do. You're so happy.

And that's good. You ought to be. The problem in the church today is not too much passion.

It's a lack thereof. All these dead holy people, they're just boring. But this passion... I mean, whoa! That's right.

Amen. At least there's one that's alive here this morning. But it's like, Preacher, get through this thing! Get the wedding over.

No, I'm not going to the reception. Jump in the car. I'm gone.

I can't wait! God's going, I can't wait. Man! What are you going to do today, Lord? I'm going to do my people good. I'm going to do them good.

I'm going to do them good. Oh, yeah, sure. I could go out there and create another couple of gajillion universes.

Oh, yeah, I could sit here all day and talk to you angels. I'm going to do my people good. I can't wait! I rejoice over that.

It brings delight to my heart to do my people good. And most of God's people almost think that God grudgingly does it because He's entered into some contract to do it. No, He rejoices to do it.

And that is so exciting to me. And it's not He rejoices to do it to Charles Spurgeon or to Mary Slessor of Calabar or to Amy Carmichael or to Brother Elliot or to John Piper, but to His people. And to the lowliest and most humble of His people, He rejoices more to do them good.

Why? More glory. All of eternity. Remember this.

All of eternity will be nothing but God lavishing His riches upon your head so that all the angels in heaven stand there every day. If you could say something about glory. Every exceeding, every passing day in glory, He will heap upon your head greater and greater degree of blessing and angels will fall into greater and greater heights of adoration because of the goodness He has shown to you.

But, let me ask you a question. Does eternal life begin when you die? Or does it begin the moment you are born again? And this demonstration that God seeks to give, does He seek to give it only to glorified saints made perfect? Or does it start now? It starts now. It starts now.

It starts the moment you believe. It starts lavishing upon you. Anything that I am, I may not be much, but anything that I am, any blessing, it's just a product of God's goodness.

That's all it is. That's all it is. And the sad thing about it is I have not more because I ask not for more.

He rejoices to do you good. He rejoices to do you good. He's excited about doing you good.

So many people down through the ages, even up to today, have almost spent their entire lives seeking the favor of some earthly king. Men who have taken care of an ancient relative only because they hope somehow that an inheritance will be left to them. Men who have given everything just to get into the presence of someone with power in hopes that somehow they might be blessed, and yet the very King of glory has made an everlasting covenant to rejoice over you in doing you good.

Now, why is He so concerned with this? Well, you can say for His own glory, and I appreciate that because that is true, but be very, very careful. Be very careful with that statement. Because He also does it because He is love.

He is love. One of the problems that I have, and I don't have many, but one of the dangers, especially of young men talking about God doing everything for His glory, is that if you don't see... You see, if you emphasize even that, if you emphasize anything about God as the greatest thing, you're probably going to get off the mark. Because God's just too big to be brought into, this is everything it's all about.

The fact of the matter is, God does everything for His own glory. Tis true, tis true. We'll spend a lifetime rejoicing in that and an eternity doing the same.

But He not only saves you because He wants to get some glory for Himself, He saves you because He really does love you and He really does love you for this reason. He's decided to. And He is love.

It's not just something He wants to express. As a matter of fact, the only reason God wants to express love is because it is what He is. It's not something He just decides either.

He is love and He is love in absolutely everything He does. You see, especially reformed guys. It's like, you know, all these covenants and things, and there's a lot of that that's so important and so true.

And because of this, God does this and all these different legal and forensic things and they're all true. I spoke about them last night. But be very careful.

You turn this into almost a politic. He is love and He loves you. He rejoices over you.

This is not just about making a promise that He's going to keep. This is because He really does. Do you think it's hard for Him to keep that promise? That's a question I like to ask people.

Do you think He's made this promise and it's a hard thing for Him to keep? Well, look at me! How could it not be? He's not looking at you. He's looking at Christ and His finished work that's really real. And it's not a hard thing to keep.

In the same way that for a believer, a true believer that's been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, the commandments of God are not a burden to Him. One of the reasons, not just that He's just a new creature, it's just that He has a love in Him for God. God's commandments are not a burden to us.

God's promises are not a burden to Him. He freely makes them because of love. He's freely able to love because of the cross of Jesus Christ, which is a perfect work.

So, if you're going to understand prayer, you have to believe something. God is willing to do you good. God has promised to do you good.

And more than that, God rejoices over you to do you good. Much of our piety... I have to speak in a couple of weeks at a conference on the denial of self, of the practice of cutting things out of your life, of self-sacrifice, things like that. That's the topic they've given me.

But when you address this issue, along with prayer and everything else, you've got to understand something. Do you realize that most people's idea of what happened in the Exodus is based more on the movie Moses or the film The Ten Commandments than it is actually on the Bible? Do you know a great amount of our views of self-denial are based upon an extremely perverted, Middle Ages type of Catholic theology? Do you realize that our ideas of piety and prayer and everything else are based on things that are not Scriptural? You'd be surprised how influenced you are by those things. What it means to be pious.

What it means to deny self. You'd be surprised. Just if I were to ask you for a moment, and I would never do this, but for you to actually physically in your mind try to imagine what Jesus looked like.

You know what's amazing? It'll be basically 16th century Catholic art that was painted by some homosexual that will come up in your brain. Do you see how powerful that is? You have to throw out all these ideas. Oh, he's so close to God.

Well, why? You ever ask that question? God really uses that guy! Well, why? Why? What's He got that you don't have? What's He done that you haven't done? What is it? All my life, young preacher, listen to me. All my young preaching life, I would look at a lot of good preachers and I would think, you know, what is it that they got? I mean, how did they get that close? What was it they did? And then some of them will actually portray, bless God, young men, if you want to be used like I'm being used, you need to do this. What I have done.

I love for young men to come and stay with me for about three or four weeks. I just love it. Go to Peru with me and things like that so that they can learn what real Christianity is about.

You follow me around, buddy. You'll know what it means to walk with God. You'll get off that plane, you will think I am the Apostle Paul.

Three weeks with me, you will be praying for my salvation. And you'll walk back to the States totally disappointed. And it's not because I don't want to be godly.

And it's not because I don't want to be Christ-like. The problem is, you're just going to see nothing but a person that God is merciful to. I'm amazed.

I think sometimes I'll see young men who think too much of me. I'll personally ask them to go to Peru with me. And I'm thinking that when they finally discover this is the grace of God, they will be so free and so happy and in fact, most of them get disappointed and angry.

And why? They're not revealing something about me. They're revealing something about them. They want to earn something.

They want to be something so that, bless God, they can tell people why God uses them. I don't have a clue why God uses me. Except that He is good.

And He has been kind. And He rejoices over His people to do His people good. Now again, a carnal person will take that and say, man, let's not worry about prayer.

Let's just live like hell and God will bless us. But if you're truly a Christian, you're going to go, whoa, I just heard a bell ring of freedom. And freedom is part of what it's all about.

Free. That song, I keep going back to it, but I love that song. You do not want me to sing it in the shower.

But I do. I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free.

Now, we're running out of time and we haven't even begun to talk about prayer, which is usually something that I do. I want you to go just quickly to Luke 18. Luke 18, verse 1. I'm just going to try to address this first verse.

Now, He was telling them a parable to show them at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. Now, there's a tremendous ministry that Satan has. You know, he's called the accuser and he is the accuser.

But there is a real way in which Satan can be called our advocate. Now, just let me explain what I'm talking about. Or at least he seeks to portray himself as our advocate, our helper.

You know, God gives Adam and Eve absolutely an entire garden. Satan fails to mention that, doesn't he? Anything you want in this garden is yours except what? This tree. Alright? So Satan comes and says, man, you know, just rolls his eyes a little bit.

Well, I see you've talked to deity over there. Man, can you believe that? He won't let you have this tree. Man, I'd let you have the tree.

Really. Jesus talks about what kind of Messiah that He was. Satan cared about Him so much, walks over to Him through Peter.

He says, now look, Jesus, God never asked you to do that. And if He did, I mean, what kind of God is He? Alright? I see this so much in Christians. Well, I've prayed and I've prayed, but I mean, no answer.

I've just lost heart in all of this. And someone walks over and goes, oh dear you, oh dear you, oh dear you, you just accused God. You just accused God.

I think it was in Ann of Green Gables or something, the lady that she was staying with there, and she said something about, oh, I'm so depressed or desperate or something, and the lady said, to be that way is to turn your back on God. And of course, in the movie, they kind of portrayed it as harsh. But look at what you're... When you lose heart in prayer, I mean, what are you saying? What are you really saying? God didn't answer me.

I've just lost heart. He didn't answer me when I asked. I mean, I've lost heart.

You should never lose heart because He withholds no good thing from His people. You should never lose heart. You pray.

And you keep praying. How long do I pray, Brother Paul? Let me just give you the answer. This is how long you pray.

You pray for what you desire in your heart until God answers you or until He shows you. Either the desire is wrong or it's not the desire's time. You just keep praying until He gives you what you seek or until He directs you in another way.

But you don't lose heart. Why? Because He is the all-sovereign God Who loves you and cares for you. If He answers you and gives you what you desire, then it is for your good.

If He withholds an answer for you and makes you tarry before Him for 15 years, it is for your good. If He tells you no, it is for your good. Whatever He does is for your good.

As a matter of fact, in the believer's life, there is nothing that ever happens to the child of God that is not good. No evil will come upon you or befall you. No evil.

No evil. You say, well, you have got to be kidding me. You sound like one of these charismatic preachers now.

No, I don't, because here's the great difference. Our definition of evil and our definition of good. What is good? That which most conforms you to the image of Jesus Christ and that which in eternity will add up to the greatest weight of glory.

So what happens? If I am healthy, it is a good thing. With my health, I have a great deal of responsibility to use my health for His glory. If my health is taken away, is it a bad thing? No.

It is a good thing. Why? It leads to greater conformity to everything He does. There's nothing evil that can befall me.

I mean, terrorists come in, shoot me down. What? I go home. Yeah, but your wife and your children, I mean, your wife's without a husband and your children are without a father.

Really? Really? What about Him being a husband to my wife? What about God being a father to my children? If my children are left without a father all the days of their life, I can honestly say, and my wife has told me this over and over, she says, it is a good thing. But if in God's sovereign will, He desires for you to be here, it is a good thing. If I am given a home, it is a good thing.

If that home is taken away, it is a good thing. You see, the thing about prayer, when Jesus talks about the model prayer there in Matthew 6, you have to understand something. Every one of these things, and over in Matthew 7, where it says, seek, you'll find.

Knock, it'll be open. All these things. They're all in the context of the person who has set in their mind this thing.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Prayer can only be accomplished in the life of the believer who has set for themselves the will of God as being the priority. The advancement of God's Kingdom as being the priority.

Absolutely everything in our life has to do with that. In this circle, we call the Kingdom of Jesus Christ the Kingdom of God. Can God make me prosperous economically? Yes.

Why will He do it? He will do it only to conform me to the image of Christ and to advance His Kingdom. But if He can conform me to the image of Christ and advance His Kingdom and give me a greater weight of glory, in glory, then He will take that away. That's the way it works.

That's the way it works. The problem is when your desires are set against His. When you desire something other than your conformity to Christ and the advancement of His Kingdom.

If you set those two things in your heart conformity to Christ, the advancement of God's Kingdom, the praise of His glory, then your life becomes like a rock. Because you sit there and say, if God gives me the ability to speak and I can preach, praise God. If an aneurysm goes off in my head and I'm left with nothing but a small ability to lift a prayer to God, even in silence, praise God.

He's given me a ministry of intercession. It's all about Him. And when it's no longer about us and it's all about Him, we're free.

We are free. Then no evil can befall us. And then prayer always makes sense.

It always makes sense. Always. It's the trust in the absolute goodness of God.

Now, I want so much to... Let me just iterate this. To lose heart has everything to do with doubting God's goodness, God's wisdom, and God's sovereignty. It's to cast dispersion upon the character of God.

So it's not an option for the believer. Now, here is a passage in verse 2-8 that doesn't fit into anybody's theology. And let me tell you something about fitting theology and making it work.

Let me just tell you something. Proper theology, the proper study of the person and things of God should always be like this. Look at it as having a suitcase and having too many clothes to put in that suitcase.

You get the suitcase all tucked in on one side where the zipper will go around. If it's too many clothes, what's going to happen? It's going to go out on the other side, isn't it? No matter how perfect you get this corner to fit, it's not going to fit over here, because there's just too many clothes to go in the suitcase.

That's the way your systematic theology ought to be.

But I want to tell you, if you can get all that stuff tucked in to a perfect suitcase or your little box, and then you can close it, I want you to know you've manipulated something or left something out in order to do it. And that's the way these passages are. I believe in the sovereignty of God.

I can say with R.C. Sproul, there's not a maverick molecule in the universe. I can say all that and it's true, true, true. But I can also say, you have not because you ask not.

A man one time got very angry with me. He said, because we were praying for revival. I don't know why they were praying for revival.

We were praying for revival, and I started to weep and cry out to God for revival. Afterwards, he was very angry with me. He said, why are you weeping? Why this emotional display? If God wants to send revival, He'll send revival.

And I said, then why on earth are we asking for it? You see? And then he sat down with me and he goes, but that's not right. I said, listen, sir, the difference is this. I'm a theologian and you're a philosopher.

He really got mad then. He said, what do you mean? I said, sir, a theologian sits there and goes, the Bible says this is true. God is one.

The Bible says this is true. There are three persons who are God. Individual, they are persons.

They are distinct. Jesus, the Son, the Father, the Holy Spirit. Now, I can as a theologian sit there a bit and work with this thing, but always realizing these are inferences I'm going to create.

Same way with prayer. God is absolutely sovereign and you have not because you ask not. Now, putting all that together, probably you should just go ahead and pray and believe these two things rather than spending your life trying to figure them out.

It's just like with the Trinity. All heresy regarding the Trinity came from those who sought to deny it and those who sought to explain it. Just affirm this.

There's a sense of the older I get, the less I have time to wrangle about words and concepts that are too big for me. Like a weaned child, I am going to walk beside Him and hope in the God of Israel. If He tells me He's sovereign, I stand on that sovereignty like a rock.

If He tells me I have not because I ask not, I ask. You know, that's why children are a lot happier than adults. And that's why childlikeness, not childishness, but childlikeness is important to walk with God.

You spend less time trying to figure Him out and just more time listening to Him, you'd do well. And He says here, He says, in a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. What is God doing? This is all about the character of God.

He is setting up something for us to display His character and give us an opportunity to trust in Him. He's going to say, now, I'm going to tell you about a wicked, immoral being. A loveless, wicked, immoral man.

This judge. Did not fear God. Did not respect man.

He didn't like anybody. He goes on, there was a widow in that city and she kept coming to him saying, give me legal protection from my opponent. Now, he goes and makes this hole even deeper.

Not only is the judge immoral, wicked, and loveless, but he wouldn't be that way to the rich man in the city. How much more to a widow that has absolutely no economic, political, physical power? Nothing. She has nothing.

Absolutely nothing. I mean, get out of here. He'd treat her like a dog.

If you think I'm exaggerating, you don't understand this culture. She was nothing. He goes on and says, give me legal protection from my opponent.

Get out of here. But look what it says, for a while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this woman, this widow, bothers me, wears him out, I will give her legal protection. Otherwise, by continually coming, she will wear me out.

Now, here's a wicked man who is loveless and immoral. Here's a woman that has absolutely nothing in her to motivate him to do something. She has no power, nothing of worth before him.

Yet because she continually comes to him, he's like, oh my gosh. Not her again. Okay, fine.

I give up. I quit. I'll do whatever you want.

Just leave me alone. Now, that's a grotesque picture of an unjust man. The whole situation is just ugly and vile.

And yet, look what he's saying. The Lord said, hear what the unrighteous judge said. Now will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night and will He delay long over them? Now, again the contrast.

This wicked judge who is loveless and immoral. If he will do these things, what do you think about God? Who's already, as we said in Ephesians 2 and Jeremiah 32, who not only has made a covenant to do you good, but rejoices over you to do you good. I'll never forget how this played out and God played this out in my own life.

It wasn't just a coincidence. It was on purpose. I'll never forget this.

It was one of the greatest teachings on prayer I ever heard in my life. I had written a discipleship book. It was kind of like a discipleship book for Latin America.

And it just went through all kinds of things about the Christian life. It was very simple. And people really liked it.

Well, I went up into the mountains and I had just enough. We had run out of them and I had just enough for several pastors that I had in mind that I was going to give it away to them. The first day that I got the conference, up in the mountains, all these just poor pastors, the first day, there was like this 15, 16 year old boy.

He saw them. And he goes, can I have one? I said, get away from me, kid. You bother me.

These are for pastors. I didn't really say that, but that's the way I felt. He's like, no.

I said, these are for pastors. I said, you know, there's a limited number of pastors and I just can't give you one. I'm sorry.

The next day, I mean, I got up in the morning, I come out of the hut, you know, wiped the sleep out of my face, and I'm like, and there he is right in front of me. Can I have a workbook? Every day, every night, every time at lunch. I thought about, maybe I can just take him out back and just beat the living daylight's out of him.

I mean, he was absolutely driving me out of my mind. My wife, I came in one day and I'm like, I'm going to kill him. I am going to kill him.

It's like, what's going on? That kid out there. Look, he's right out there. There's not even a back door to this hut.

I can't get out of this place. Finally, the last day, I go to a pastor and I go, look, I'm really sorry I can't give you one of these. Why? Because I'm going to take it over to this kid because I'm either going to kill him or he's going to kill me.

And I gave it to him. He just drove me absolutely out of my mind. Which wasn't a very far journey.

And then, I mean, I wasn't thinking about this passage. I wasn't thinking about anything. And I sat down.

He was away from me. I sat down on a log and I'm sitting there going, oh, thank God. It's over.

It's over. And God said, now, hear what the Lord says. Now, I can tell you what.

I can start right now if you want. We can spend the next two hours. I can back up.

I can put a suit on. And I can speak with you regarding some very high theology. I can clean this whole thing up and I can make it look and fit something that really seems to have a great deal of integrity.

The way I've been preaching this just sounds too vulgar for a good sermon. We can back up and we can do that. And we can explain this passage away.

We can. We can make it look so good and just explain it away. I'm not going to do that.

I use the word vulgar in the Latin sense of being common, not high speaking. There's a real sense in which this parable itself, this story itself, this teaching itself is vulgar. It sets before us something that you either have to just go, okay, alright, I'm going to take what I have here.

Or you can spend a great deal of time dressing this thing up and sucking all the power out of it. And I won't do that. What is He basically telling us? You pray and don't lose heart.

You storm heaven. You knock on the door. You lay there.

You get on His doorstep and you stay there every day. Now, this would be rude to do this to such a high king unless such a high king tells you to do it. He tells you to do it.

I don't understand the passage that well. But He tells us to do it. Do you believe? One of the saddest verses in the entire Bible, in my opinion, look in v. 7 of Luke 18.

I'm going to stop. He says, Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night? And will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. I'm telling you, you endure.

You pray. You don't lose heart. You cry out to this good and loving God who is all-sovereign and rejoices to do good over you.

You cry out to Him. He is going to do something. And then it's like He stops and goes, but then again, when I come back, will I even find anybody believing me about this? Is anybody really going to believe it? When the Son of Man comes, will He find any kind of faith like this on the earth? You know, I never see anywhere in Scripture where Jesus marvels over a man's ability to espouse correct theology.

I never see Him stand amazed at someone's intellect or someone's great ability to grasp the major issues of the Christian faith. But I do see Him amazed at someone's faith. And I do see Him amazed at other people's unbelief.

It's not believing that He will give you exactly everything that you ask of Him. It is believing that He will work and do greater things than what you can ask or think. You see, here's the way it comes down over the long term, over the many years of praying.

Here's what you discover. He does not always give you everything you ask for, but over the long term, you quickly recognize that He always does for you greater than anything you could ever ask or think. And I'm always hearing preachers say that most of you don't have the answers to prayer that you're asking for because you don't continue praying.

And that's something of what I've said. But let me tell you something very, very important. Listen.

It is not that God has not answered many of your prayers. God has answered more of your prayers than most of you can even realize. It's just we ask for things and totally forget about it.

And then three or four years down the line, He answers it in a far greater way than we could have ever asked or thought. And we do not praise Him. You're not a people.

If you are the people of God, I will not tell you you don't have your prayers answered. I'll tell you, you have more prayers answered than you ever imagined. And that ought to encourage you.

Because look at the pitiful praying you have done and then look back and see that He has answered those far beyond anything of your faith. That encourages me. That encourages me.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for every facet of who You are. For everything You are.

Absolutely everything that You are. Thank You for everything You have done. Everything You're going to do.

Thank You for prayers You have answered. Thank You for prayers that You will answer. Thank You for absolutely everything.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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