

God's Truth About Responsibility

by Russell Kelfer

We are responsible to God for our actions, and we should not blame society, our parents, or God for our failures and weaknesses.

Duration: 36:44

Scripture: Job 10:2, Job 13:24, Job 29:2-5, Job 29:24, Job 31:35, Job 35:15, Job 38:1-3

Topics: "Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the controversial topic of responsibility and who is to blame for our problems. He discusses the common belief that Satan is responsible for our besetting sins, but challenges this notion by citing biblical verses that encourage believers to resist the devil and draw near to God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of taking personal responsibility for our actions and choices, rather than blaming external factors such as society, parents, or even God. He encourages listeners to develop a strong character based on biblical principles and to rely on God's power while making their own choices.

Transcript

The lesson you're about to hear is designed to help you in your spiritual pilgrimage. We pray that this will be a blessing in your life. Our teacher is Russell Kelfer of the Into His Likeness radio broadcast.

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We also invite you to visit us anytime on the World Wide Web. Our Internet address is simply www.dtm.org. We pray God's richest blessing may be yours as He continues to live His life in you. We return to our study of Satan's lies and God's truth and the resulting conflict that leads to double-mindedness in the life of Christians.

Last Sunday we concluded our look at Satan's lies about authority, a study that took us into the realms of parental authority, discipline, rebellion, even patriotism, and finally ended last week with a look at Satan's challenge to God's final authority. Do you remember what that was? He challenged God's truth that the Word is perfect, that the Word is permanent, that the Word is precious, that the Word is personal, that the Word is practical, and that the Word is powerful and therefore the Words should be pre-eminent in the

lives of every Christian. Well, we are nearing the end of our side trip concerning Satan's lies.

We come this morning to what is a potentially controversial area for some. After some of the subjects covered in this series, I suppose you might wonder what else might be considered controversial. The subject is Satan's Lies and God's Truth About Responsibility, and the title of this morning's lesson is, The Devil Made Me Do It.

We are going to talk about who is to blame for our problems. How much can we blame on society? How much can we blame on our parents? How much can we blame on God? And how much can we blame on Satan? Satan has captured the mind of man with the lies he has created in this area. Here are his four basic lies concerning responsibility.

Lie number one, we can blame society for our failures. Lie number two, we can blame our parents for our weaknesses. Lie number three, we can blame God for our circumstances and our defects.

And, lie number four, we can blame Satan for our besetting sins. When we get through, somebody is responsible for everything. Satan has robbed the Christian of the capacity to make life's one most basic statement, Lord, it's my fault.

This morning we are going to begin with the first lie that society can be blamed for our failures. The lie is that man has a scapegoat for immorality. Remember from Satan's perspective, nothing is absolute.

So all you have to do is trace the blame for your problems back to another whose behavior justifies yours. Or if you can't pin down one person, we use the term society as our scapegoat. Let me give you an example of what teachers are hypothetically posing to their students to teach them situation ethics.

This was taken from a teacher's workbook on a seminar called Value Clarification Seminar, and its purpose was to teach teachers to teach values to their children. Here's the hypothetical story. It says, who's to blame? Here's a story in which you will meet several characters.

You will be asked to rank order them, whatever that means. That's a new phrase, but that's what you're supposed to do. With the person most distasteful to you in the number one spot, and the person least distasteful to you in the number fourth spot.

Now remember, nobody is right or wrong, but somebody is more distasteful to you than the others. Here are the characters. Here's the cast.

Number one, there's a high school student who is selling marijuana to junior high school kids because he is desperately in need of money. He wants to get the transmission fixed on his car, and he needs the car to get a job as a busboy at the country club. Character number one.

However, the car he bought, it turns out, had its transmission filled with sawdust. Bad scene. Which kept it running just long enough to go beyond the ten day guarantee given by the used car salesman.

When confronted, here's character number two, the used car salesman said, look, that's just the way we took the car in. We didn't check it. We didn't do anything to it, good or bad.

Go see the guy that sold it to us. So, on the buck goes. Character number one justified his behavior because he needed the transmission, he needed the car fixed so he could make, keep his job.

Number two said, it was just ignorance on my part, you can't blame me. Enter character number three, the man who sold the car to the used car dealer sold it in a hurry because he bought a new house in the suburbs and he had to raise the money for closing costs quickly or his family wouldn't have a roof over its head. The car he sold was really their second car and he was going to fix it, but he got into a bind and so he put the sawdust in and sold it to the used car lot for wholesale price.

The used car dealer cleaned it up, sold it to the high school student for retail price and he made \$85. Now the impression is that that, of course, is a sin. The new house buyer said he wouldn't have done what he did if he hadn't been desperate and he blamed the banker because the banker didn't tell him in advance how much the closing costs would be.

The banker said if he hadn't been so cheap he'd have hired a lawyer that knew about closing costs, not my fault. He wanted to save a few bucks and do it yourself. We handle too many deals, we can't keep up with everything.

Business is business and we're in the business of lending money. This is the situation the teachers were told, now your job is to rank order these people. I love that phrase, whatever it means.

Put the one you consider least blameless in the number four spot, the one you blame the most in the number one spot, and when you've done this we'll break up into quartets. That sounds harmonious, to discuss your rankings. Then the teachers were given the correct answer or the most logical answer.

Now let's see, who do you think was the baddie in the deal? First of all, how many of you think it was the student that sold marijuana to the junior high kids? Raise your hand. He was the least desirable, nobody's right and wrong. How many of you think it was the car dealer that sold the car with transmission stuffed full of sawdust? Oh, all right, one.

We've got a lot of used car lovers here. Number two, how many of you think it was the owner of the car who had to panic and sell his car because he wanted to buy a house? Some of you aren't voting at all. How many of you think the banker was to blame? Okay.

Guess who was the guilty party? The teachers were told it was the banker. That's who. He represents cold, unfeeling society, and his insensitivity justifies the student's immorality and the used car dealer's immorality.

No one was really right or wrong, you understand. The question is, who was the most distasteful? The same teachers were told, be sure and remember, when you're teaching your children, nothing is really wrong. It's relative.

Society, authority, these are the culprits. You go to a high school basketball or football game, and Johnny's team lost. Now, Johnny's your son, remember.

Who's to blame? I don't know how many of these games you've gone to, but 99 percent of the time, the referee is to blame. One right call on his part, and you know these Christian parents sit around at the game, and they scream, and they yell, and they get in the car with their kids and say, you don't want that game if it wasn't for that referee. He gave you a bad deal.

He gets to blame. Society says, alcoholism, who's to blame? It's the pressures of society. Homosexuality, who's to blame? It's the changing mores in our society.

The rapes, the robberies, all of these things, society is to blame because they're beyond our control. They're not crimes. They're not sins.

They're just, society is to be blamed for the atmosphere that's created. It's a lie. You and I were designed to be personally accountable to God for our behavior, and our children are to be taught the same thing.

But my friends, this is not what they're being taught in school. This is not what they're being taught on television. A couple who has a marriage problem, the woman goes for secular counseling, and most of the time the counselor says, you're okay, he's a bum.

You got a bad deal. Submit to him. He's to blame, or else society is to blame.

After all, the chances of a workable marriage are only 45% anyhow. Society is the culprit. What is society? Society is Satan's counterfeit on earth of God's kingdom.

It is a physical kingdom where he is Lord, where physical desires control physical destinies, and physical circumstances are the deciding factors between success and failure. And somebody is always to blame. You remember Adam and Eve in the garden? The Jehovah comes and he looks for them, and he finally finds them, and there they are.

And you recall the first thing that came out of Adam's mouth was, Lord, it's not my fault, my wife. She's responsible. And she tugs at his sleeve and says, Lord, it's not my fault.

There was a snake crawling around over here, and he made me do it. The devil made me do it. You see the problem? And the very structure of society is designed to alienate man from God, to destroy man's concept of God, to blur man's image of God.

This Christian, meanwhile, is born spiritually into a new kingdom while living physically in the old. And whatever society does to assail him, God says, I will actually use that to strengthen you. Out of society's worst will come my best, God says, so society can no longer be the scapegoat for the Christian.

Do your children know that? Do you know that? Man has been given by God responsibilities. He is accountable to God for how he performs those responsibilities regardless of circumstances that society might thrust his way. And these are just a few of them.

There are many, many, but do our children understand, number one, they have a responsibility to love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, with all their strength, no matter what circumstances may come their way, no matter how they may feel about it at the time. Do they realize they have a responsibility, 1 Thessalonians 4.11 and 2 Thessalonians 3.10 tell us, to work hard by the sweat of their brow with their hands? Do they understand that? That's a responsibility, that's a privilege. Do they understand and do we understand scripturally we're to pay our bills no matter what, Romans 13.8. Owe no man anything except the debt of love, Proverbs 3.27.28. Don't say some other time if you can pay now.

Do they understand they're to honor their parents no matter what, Exodus 20.12, Mark 7.10. Do they understand they're to serve their country no matter what, even if it's a war they don't think should be fought, even if there's a president in office they don't think should be there. Do they understand there's a responsibility a man has to lead his family no matter what, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Do they understand a man is to love his wife no matter what, Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. Do they understand that to submit

to the authority that's placed over them no matter what, whether they like it or not. I don't know how many of you are in positions of hiring, but those that are will readily agree that in today's society it's a real experience to interview people for jobs.

Their first questions are, what are the benefits for me? The Christian's responsibility ought to be, God's men ought to say, what is the will of God and how can I best serve? The second lie is that our parents are to blame for our weaknesses. The world, society if you will, is teaching our children that most of their weaknesses are the result of broken homes and immature or immoral parents. In a poll listed in a recent magazine, 75% of all the students interviewed said they would like to trade in their parents for something better.

One teen looked me straight in the eye and exclaimed, my friends and I have talked it over. We didn't ask to be born. So whatever our parents get, they deserve.

And whatever we want, they ought to provide. Responsibility? None. Do your children know that God picked you out from all the people in the world to be their parents? They ought to.

And they ought to understand these basic principles regarding parents. Principle number one, God selects each parent for each child and God has never made a mistake. Psalm 139, you were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion.

You scheduled each day of my life before I was born. Isaiah 44, thus saith the Lord that made thee and formed thee from the womb. Principle number two, that God's primary goal for parenthood is character development in the child.

We forget that. We think all we're supposed to do is keep them out of jail. Teach them.

You've seen, this is what Deuteronomy 11 says, teach them. You've seen God. You've seen God's miracles.

You know what it is to be strong. You know what it is to have courage. You know what it is to be content.

You know what it is to be grateful. You know what it is to be faithful. So take your children and teach them these things day and night and day and night.

Principle number three, do they know that God uses negatives as well as positives to develop character? Genesis 50, 20, you remember, says, God, you meant evil unto me, but God meant it unto good to bring to pass this day to save much people alive. Joseph, you recall, was the object of that passage. He was the object of parental favoritism.

He was led, which led to pure rejection, which led to unjust persecution, which led to further rejection until God's mind was finally formed in Joseph. Fourthly, God commands all His children to honor their parents, Ephesians 6, 2. Your emotional and spiritual well-being may hang in the balance. Number five, as we honor them, God becomes responsible to use even their weaknesses for His glory.

Principle number six, therefore, to blame our parents for our weaknesses is, first of all, to deny our responsibility to obey and to deny God's sovereignty over man. Basically, what it's saying is, who art thou to contend with God? Can the clay say to the potter, why did you make me like this? What it means is, I had no control over who my parents are, so I'm not responsible for my behavior. That's a lie.

You say, but my parents have ruined my life by their mistakes. That's not possible. Their mistakes created conditions you needed to become God's man or woman in the years to come.

Here's how Romans 8.28 works in the family. There isn't time to copy all these notes. If you want them, I'll try to give them to you next week.

In the left-hand column, you see the negative qualities of parents. In the center column, you see the problem that this created. In the last column, you see the potential result in the kingdom.

My parents were guilty of favoritism, you say. So were Joseph's. This created a spirit of rejection.

But the spirit of rejection was a vacuum into which the Spirit came, and God will ultimately turn rejection into humility. You say, my parents were guilty of deceit. This creates a spirit of distrust.

But God in His Spirit can take distrust by the Spirit and turn it into a spirit of discernment. You say, my parents were guilty of temporal inadequacy. It means they didn't have enough money.

And this created physical poverty. The result, though, from God's perspective, can be a value system. If you don't believe it, you talk to people who have been in this kind of situation, and God takes hold of their lives.

What an understanding they have of the real values in life. You say, my parents were guilty of temper. This creates a spirit of fear, which can be used of God to create reverence.

You say, I came from a broken home, and this created a spirit of insecurity. But God can use that insecurity to create a spirit of compassion. As we mentioned, part of the blame we place on our parents is that of rejection.

And it is at this point I want to be most careful. The subject is self-image, and the culprit is rejection. And I firmly agree with all the needed teaching today about the results of personal rejection and the negative self-image that results from this.

But please be careful. As always, the danger is not from wrong teaching as much as overreaction to right concepts, taking concepts out of context, until all your problems come from being rejected, and now you have a new scapegoat. As we will see in a moment, to some degree it is Satan that is capitalizing on this rejection syndrome among Christians, because rejection by man ultimately leads one to seek acceptance from God.

It's a tool in the potter's hand. And remember, a self-image, by scriptural definitions, is not really all that super. Self is supposed to die, remember? An image is supposed to obey, remember? And do you want to be so pleased with yourself until you call on it to call the shots? I don't think so.

You don't need a good self-image as much as you need to rejoice in God's image. Paul would have failed most of the modern exams on self-acceptance. Listen to what he said, Oh, wretched man that I am! I am the least of all the saints.

I am the chief of all the sinners. And at one point he has surveyed all of his earthly credentials and summarized them. They are dung, waste, refuse.

Talk about your self-image just long enough to see God's design. But not to blame your parents. God gave you those parents to give you, ultimately, His image.

And without those weaknesses, some of you would be lost today. Lie number three. God is to blame for our defects and our circumstances.

In the heat of the battle, we, unmindful of what we're doing, often question the fairness of God, the integrity of God, and the love of God. When times are tough, God is the culprit. He's sovereign, isn't He? Shouldn't He have prevented this calamity? If I were God, I don't ever finish that sentence.

Because it hangs on a disastrous, blasphemous hypothesis. I think Job is our best example of how not to respond when the heat is on. Job was a man after God's own heart, and we're glad of that.

But boy, when the heat was on, he blamed God for everything. I'm going to give you some of these very quickly. In chapter 3, verse 7, verse 9, he says, Let the stars of the night disappear, curse it for its failure to shut my mother's womb, for letting me be born into all this trouble.

Why didn't I die at birth? Why did the midwife let me live? Why did she nurse me at her breast? If only I died at birth, I would be quiet, asleep, and at rest, along with prime ministers and kings, with all their pomp and wealthy princes, oh, to have been stillborn, to have never breathed or seen the light of day. Isn't that a great attitude? Don't laugh. Examine your own.

In chapter 7, verse 11, oh, let me express my anguish. Let me just get it all out. That's popular.

Let me be free to speak out of the bitterness of my soul. Oh, God, am I some monster that you never let me alone? I would rather die of strangulation than go on like this. I hate my life.

What is mere man that you should spend your time persecuting him? Must you be his inquisitor every morning? Won't you let me alone, even long enough to spit? Great guy. Number four, he blamed God for laughing at his problems. Have you ever said that? Verse 22, innocent or evil, it's all the same to God.

He destroys both kinds. He will laugh when calamity crushes the innocent. And then we blame God for not providing a way out.

But in verse 32 and 33, he says, I can't defend myself. You're no man as I am, God. If you were, then we could discuss it fairly.

But there's no umpire between us, no mediator to bring us together. You see the lies? And then in verse, chapter 10, he blames God for not explaining why. He says, God, won't you tell me why all these things are happening? I'm not going to be satisfied if you don't tell me why.

I'm weary of living, he says. Let me complain freely. I will speak in sorrow and bitterness.

He loves to do that. I will say to God, don't just condemn me, tell me why. Sounds familiar.

And then he blamed God for favoring the wicked in verses 3 through 8. And then he blamed God in chapter 13 for being unwilling to forgive. In chapter 29, he longed for the good old days. And then in chapter 31, he proclaimed his own righteousness once again.

Interesting to note that God's method to get Job's attention was trouble. God's method to teach him, once he finally quit babbling and began to listen, was to ask him questions he couldn't answer. It's a good teaching method.

You might try it sometime with your children. We not only blame God for our circumstances, we blame God for our defects, those unchangeable characteristics that set us apart from our peers. Here the problem is, we don't understand the ways of God.

What God is after is a unique ministry from you. To achieve that, he needs a unique message. To achieve that, he allows people, incidents, and circumstances to enter your life early that create insecurity, dependence, rejection, and weakness.

These weaknesses are then the tools that God uses to carve out his message, his strength through your life, the concept of a life message. There are at least seven or eight things that go into a life message. They begin in your childhood.

They begin at birth. The first is your parents. You may have had one or two in your home.

They may have been harsh or they may have been loving. They may have been Christians or they may have not been Christians. They may have been partial.

They may have been just. You may have come from a foster home or an orphanage. But all of this is part of your life message.

It's for a purpose. Secondly, you have some unchangeable defects. Some of you say, speak for yourself.

I will. But some of you do also. Appearance, ability, and intelligence for some.

You may be too short or too tall. You may be graceful or you may be clumsy. You may be slim or you may be heavy.

You may be attractive or you may be homely. You may be blonde or you may be brunette. Whatever it is, you probably wish it was something else.

Then there's your ability or lack of it. You may be athletic. You may not.

You may have skilled hands. You may not. You may be a musician.

You may not. You may be an artist. You may not.

You may be a writer. You may not. Or you may be a member of the JDDNW club, like some of us are.

Just don't do nothing well. Then the problem may be intelligence. You may be a Rhodes Scholar or you may be no scholar.

You may be the head of your class or the heel of your class. But either way, there are some unchangeable defects that you can't control. And God knows that, and He loves it.

Thirdly, there are times of rejection in your childhood. You may have been rejected by your parents, by your peers, by the opposite sex, by your teachers. Maybe you were rejected by the people you rejected.

I don't know. But most of us fell into some form of rejection, and it made a deep wound, a deep scar in our lives. And then there's your name.

Some of you like it. Most of you don't. There was an article in a paper this week where a teenager wrote in to this teenage expert and said, I don't like my first name.

I would like to change it. And the expert wrote back and said, I don't blame you. I think it's a good idea.

But you have to wait until you're an adult. But you see, God chose that name. He gave it to you.

The Scripture says He calls you by that name. And then there were personal traumas. There were key influences and people in your life, certain childhood experiences.

Maybe your health. You may be healthy as an ox. You may be sick as a dog.

But whatever the situation, all of these things go into making your life message. But prior to your conversion, they made up a battle for self-image. You were trying to compare yourself with everybody.

And because of these unchangeable defects, these rejection points in your life, this led to conflict. You had to convince yourself. Ambition.

You had to prove yourself. Competition. You had to exalt yourself.

But oh, how beautiful, because then Jesus came. And death became life. The curse becomes a blessing.

Weakness can be turned to strength. Defeat can become victory. Rejection can become acceptance.

And your name can now become a character potential as God works a miracle through your life. And as the Word begins to take root in your heart, you now have a unique message that no one else has. No one else has that combination of those things that could produce, just like your thumbprint, a divinely unique individual.

No two messages are the same. And as you surrender to God's image, you win the battle for self-image. And now you develop a ministry, 2 Corinthians 1, 3, and 4, based on the uniqueness of your message.

That's the concept of a life message. So the Christian doesn't blame God for his defects. He thanks God for them and cooperates as God builds through them his very special life message.

And you have one. The fourth lie is Satan is to blame for our besetting sins. No use to spend a lot of time here, but we must understand the principle.

All over Christendom today, we hear the refrain, I couldn't help myself. Satan overpowered me. In other words, the devil made me do it.

Personally, I like that line, except for a few verses like this, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

How about this one? Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. You see the problem? The truth is found in James 1, verses 12-17. Blessed the man that endures temptation.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The living Bible says temptation is the pull of man's own evil thoughts and desires.

Those evil thoughts lead to evil actions. In other words, what it says is, it is not God soliciting you to do evil. He is incapable of that.

But neither is it Satan forcing you to do evil. He is not strong enough. What it says is, it is you wanting to do evil.

Now why can't we accept the responsibility for that? Because the key is, as we begin to accept the responsibility, God begins to be accountable. So God is concerned that we return to the scriptural concept of accountability. Society isn't to blame for our problems, because rather society, Satan's counterfeit to the kingdom, ought to be a mirror that reflects what God doesn't want from us.

Our parents aren't to blame for our weaknesses. Rather, God chose our parents. Both their strengths and their weaknesses, their successes and their failures are for his glory.

And God isn't to blame for our defects, because every good and acceptable gift comes from God. So the defects he allows us to have are gifts to draw us to the only thing in the world that is perfect, himself. And Satan isn't to blame for our sins, because just as God can't tempt us, Satan can't make us sin.

He's not strong enough. If we resist in the Spirit, God becomes responsible, and Satan must flee. So God is responsible, proportionate to our willingness to accept our accountability.

That's the truth about man's responsibility. And we need to teach it to the generation who is right on our heels. Here are some ways to do it.

How to develop a spirit of responsibility in your children. You say, my children are grown, mine are too, but we could take somebody else's children and start. Number one, teach them the principle of accountability.

By divine plan, they are responsible for certain things, despite circumstances. To love the Lord, to honor their parents, to serve their country, to obey authority, to work hard, to pay their bills, whether they want to or not. Secondly, teach them the truth about sowing and reaping.

Show them cause and effect in life when they do something, and the result of what they do, let them pay for the results. Thirdly, give them room to fail safely. Build a hedge about them, the way God builds a hedge about us.

There are limits to which Satan cannot go to get to us, but within the scope of that hedge, God lets us fall and skin our knees again and again. That's the only way we learn our lessons. Build a hedge, but let them fail.

Fourthly, give them rewards for succeeding. Satan hates that. You see, the basic underlying principle is that Satan wants to deny the truth of God, which says that God will one day reward the saints.

And because Satan hates that, he tries to teach that any system of rewards is bribery. It's a lie. Fifthly, teach them character qualities from the time they are old enough to breathe.

Teach them the value of honesty, the value of faithfulness, the value of truthfulness. Teach them the word of God on the basis of the character of God. Sixth, teach them to earn money.

The right to earn is a gift. The need to earn is a must. Seventh, reward faithfulness with more responsibility.

What did he say? Well, done thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I'm going to make you foreman.

Loose translation. You understand the principle? I think most of us do. That's the truth about man's responsibility.

And God's way is so different from Satan's way. God says the buck stops here. If I want a good marriage, I have to obey his principles.

If I'm wronged, I answer without retaliation. As society departs from truth, I must stand more firmly than ever before. God says the power is his, but the choices are ours.

And he holds me accountable for how I choose to respond, and he holds you accountable for how you choose to respond. Not society, not your parents, not God himself, not even the devil. That's God's truth about responsibility.

May we accept it wholeheartedly. May we teach it unashamedly. And if we do, the future generations that follow us will thank us enthusiastically.

Let's pray. Father, we're often unmindful of our own accountability. We do, Father, live in a world where the government is responsible for some things and society for others and our parents for others, but we're really not taught often to take the responsibility for our own actions.

You've told us, Father, Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. That if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. But if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life.

Father, there may be some of us here this morning who have been wrestling with this concept of a self-image and continually using the fact that we have been rejected as children or rejected as adults as a reason not to face our God-given responsibilities. And, Father, this morning we just pray that you'd touch our hearts. Help us to see somehow, Father, that even the rejections of life, even the traumas of life were but the hands of the potter working with the clay to create in us potential to be a unique message with a unique ministry.

Father, some of us need to transmit to those younger than we the importance in the generation we live in of being accountable and responsible, trusting God for the power, but realizing that we must exercise our own will. And so, Lord, we just pray that this lesson might somehow awaken us to our responsibilities and that we might crown you again King of Kings and Lord of Lords in our life. For we ask it in the sweet name of Jesus.

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