

# Can I Merit Eternal Life?

by Thabiti Anyabwile

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*The kingdom of heaven pays its workers with a denarius for a day's work, and the reward of the kingdom is not based on human merit, but on God's graciousness and love.*

**Duration:** 43:49

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:1-5, Matthew 19:30 - 20:16, Romans 9:20-21

**Topics:** "Eternal Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses the parable of the workers in the vineyard to emphasize the idea that serving the Lord is not a labor that goes unrewarded. The parable illustrates how those who are brought into the kingdom and labor for the Lord will be rewarded with the blessings of the kingdom. The preacher highlights the concept of everlasting joy and unending rewards for those who serve God faithfully. He also addresses the issue of grumbling and emphasizes the importance of giving thanks in all things, knowing that God is a generous and fair God.

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## Transcript

Well, I was shocked to hear my brother say that he'd been married 20 years. He looks about 23. So, you are taking very good care of him.

I have one more night left after tonight to finish my Canadian education. It has began in earnest on the first night. Our brother Theobald told us that it was the Canadians who whipped the Americans in the War of 1812.

I can confirm that. I accept that. Tonight, I got a little help with my preaching.

As I was walking here, there was this adorable and handsome young lad, full of energy, bright face. He looked at me. He says, I know the answer to your question for tonight.

I said, great, what's the answer? He says, no, which is the correct answer. I said, that's right, well done. And then he looks at me with blood earnest and he says, now maybe you can finish in five minutes so we can get to the talent show.

Reminds me of my mother who tells me, says, now make him happy when you get up and make him happy when you sit down. And the way you do that is not taking too much time in between. There is one thing about my Canadian education that's not yet complete, though, perhaps you can help me tonight.

I'm still not sure that I know who is the greatest hockey player in the history of hockey. If it's Howe, or if it's Gresky, or if it's Tim Hortons. Perhaps you'll give me your opinion.

A question as we start tonight. Why are you spending your life the way you're spending it? Consider what you're investing your life in. Why that choice? Why that particular way of taking this precious thing of which we only get one and expending it in that set of activities or that set of relationships or that set of ambitions.

Think about the path that you've chosen. The things that you're giving yourself to. And ask, why am I doing this? What am I looking for out of it? What's in it for me? Perhaps you're on the younger side of the age spectrum.

You're maybe eight or nine or ten or maybe you're a teenager and your ambitions are sort of yet future. There's something you're looking forward to doing. Perhaps you want to become a farmer or a doctor or a teacher.

Perhaps you even aspire to some aspect of ministry. Why? Why are you even now preparing to give your life to that particular pursuit? And is what you're doing with your life or planning to do with your life when you think about it, is it worth it? Is it worth it? We've been considering Matthew's Gospel, section beginning in chapter 18 where Jesus is approached by a series of persons who ask him questions of various sorts, who lay before him these inquiries that really in many ways help us to expose our own thinking and our own heart and to discover, as it were, some truths about the kingdom of heaven. We come this evening to Matthew chapter 20.

We want to look at this parable that Jesus tells in verses 1 to 16. It's a parable that's bracketed by verse 30 in Matthew 19, many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first, and a very similar statement down in verse 16 of Matthew 20, so the last will be first and the first will be last, and in truth this parable is really explaining something that Jesus has already answered in chapter 19, which Lord willing we'll look at tomorrow. This is a rather striking statement though.

Many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first. The last will be first, the first will be last. How is that possible? Don't we live in a culture, in a society that says now, be first, to finish, to cross the line first, to win the prize, that in so many ways our lives and our ambitions are defined by this notion of being first, of being winners and not losers.

Isn't that held out to us as the holy grail of human living? Whatever you do, be a success. Whatever you do, be first. Whatever you do, be the best in your field.

And here Jesus says there is in a certain sense a way in which the kingdom turns all of that on its head. The last will be first and the first will be last. And yet as we shall see in this parable, in the kingdom, there is this great and unimaginable reward that flattens things in such a way that everyone receives such a reward in Christ that none feel themselves to be last.

Look with me in Matthew chapter 20 verses 1 to 16. This is God's word. For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard.

He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, you also go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right.

So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around.

He asked them, why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing? Because no one has hired us, they answered. He said to them, you also go and work in my vineyard. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.

The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.

When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. These men who were hired last worked only one hour, they said. And you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.

He answered one of them, friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give to the man who was hired last the same as I gave you.

Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious? Because I am generous. So the last will be first. And the first will be last.

Before we come to our final question, this sort of framing this talk, the question of is God fair? Which really sort of finds its sort of genesis in the grumbling and the questioning of these workers who were hired first. Before we want to do that, we want to observe three things about the kingdom itself. Three things that are obvious that I trust even in their obviousness will be edifying to us.

First of all, that the kingdom of heaven pays. It pays, it rewards. Secondly, that the kingdom of heaven pays equally.

Equally. And that the kingdom of heaven pays thirdly graciously. Its wages are determined by the grace of heaven.

First, the kingdom pays. You see that in verse one. The landowner is a symbolic representation of God.

And the vineyard is a frequent image used in the Old Testament for the kingdom of God or the people of God. Landowner goes out selecting workers for his vineyard. And so it is with God.

Going out and selecting in his sovereign grace those whom he calls into his kingdom. Whom he gathers in an ever-expanding way into his vineyard. Before a person is brought into the kingdom, his life is idle.

It's pictured for us here in the parable in verses three and six. You see there the king went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. Verse six about the eleventh hour.

He went out and found still others standing around. Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing? And you can see this. This parable reads almost like a description of many downtowns across the world.

Where you may go and find men and women idle, standing, unemployed, unengaged, just standing around. Some looking for work, some avoiding it like my brother-in-law. But those brought into the kingdom and who labor for the Lord are paid with the rewards of that very kingdom.

That's the main point of the parable. Living in and working for the kingdom receives God's gracious reward. And that gracious reward will redound to our everlasting joy.

An unending joy. I mean can you think of the most joyful time in your life? Reach back and find that for a moment. That joy which was momentary is but a faint and shallow glimmer of that full joy and satisfying love that will come with Christ in the fullness of his kingdom.

It's as though our joys in this life are commercials for that life that's coming. It's their advertisements for that complete joy which Christ shall bring with him when he gathers his people and brings them into the circumference of his eternal love. This parable is pointing us to that.

It's an obvious thing but as Christians I think we need to be reminded that serving the Lord is not a labor that goes unrewarded. C.S. Lewis said that the New Testament was just unashamed in its putting forth of rewards as a motivation to the Christian life. And some of us because we have thought of altruism and doing good and serving the Lord as somehow disconnected from joy have almost sapped from our Christian lives that very motivator of a coming joy in Christ.

I love the story of a little boy in Scotland. Spent a lot of time with his grandfather who owned a farm. He was riding in the back seat of the car with his grandfather one day as they were driving through the countryside seeing the rolling hills of Scotland and the sheep and the cattle on the sides of the hills and they made their way into a little town.

As they were driving into the town they passed a donkey. And the little boy very excited in the back seat says, Granddad, Granddad, guess what? Granddad says, yes, he says, that donkey is a Christian. Granddad says, no, no, no, no, donkeys aren't Christian.

And he says, oh, that donkey is a Christian. And the grandfather pooh-poohs him again and continued to drive and in a few moments said, darling, what in the world was he talking about? So he looks in the mirror, he catches his eyes and he says, lad, he says, what do you mean that donkey was a Christian? Donkeys can't be Christians. He said, yes, he was, uh-huh, because his face was long.

Doesn't it seem that there are so many Christians who define Christianity as this morbid, sad, long-faced drudgery. They're Christians who aren't happy unless they're unhappy. And others around them are unhappy.

It's how they sanctify us. Jesus points out here that the kingdom is a kingdom, very simply, that pays. The image is the image of a denarius for a day's work, but that denarius is simply a representation of that coming day where the Christian shall receive his or her reward.

And maybe you've come tonight thinking that, you know what, I'm not really interested in this Christian thing. All I hear is of the cost of following Christ. And the Christians I know, well, they don't seem to really be all that happy.

And as a matter of fact, there's a lot going on in the world that I'd rather enjoy and would rather not give up. If I become a Christian, there are parties I can't attend. If I become a Christian, there are certain friendships that I can't continue.

And if I become a Christian, I have to give up this intimate relationship that I care about or I have to give up this habit that I really enjoy, that somehow other Christians seem to think is sin or somehow wrong. So

you may be focused on the cost of following Jesus. And let me be clear, it will cost you to follow Christ.

It will cost you everything. It will cost you your entire life. Your life will no longer be your own.

You will be a slave to Christ, and yet Christ is a generous, He's a generous master. It will cost you, but it's worth it. All those fleets and passing joys and privileges of this life are not worthy to be compared.

The joys and the sweetness and the glory and the beauty and the majesty and the splendor and the awesomeness of knowing Christ Jesus, the resurrected Lord, who brings with Him glory that we get to share in as His people. This parable is really an answer to Peter's question back in chapter 19. Turn with me there just for a moment, because Peter is asking the question that so many people ask in terms of, is it worth it to follow Christ? Why would I do that? Back in chapter 19, verse 27, Jesus had just pointed out that it was almost impossible for rich people to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And Peter, like many of us, would assume that rich people sort of have it better. And so he asked the question. He says, we have left everything to follow you.

What then will it be for us? You see what he's asking. He said, it cost us everything. Is it worth it? Verse 29, Jesus begins to speak of the glories of heaven.

Verse 28, sit on thrones. Verse 29, everyone who's left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. He said, yes, it's worth it.

It's exceedingly worth it. It is beyond worth it to follow me and to enter into my kingdom. Now, I don't know what it's like to have a hundred mothers.

I imagine it's beyond, it's beyond our comprehension. And it's got to be good because Jesus doesn't say here, you'll have a hundred mother-in-laws. And he comes to this parable to explain and to unpack what that would be like.

If you're here and you're not a Christian, let me exhort you to sell all and purchase Christ. Jesus in Matthew 13 tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who was in a field and found a treasure. And having found that treasure, for the joy of it, he went away, he buried the treasure, he went away, sold all he had, came back and purchased that field.

It's a picture of relinquishing all that is in this world so that you may purchase and enjoy an exceeding treasure. And Jesus is that treasure. The life he gives is that life.

If you're here and you're not a Christian, please see and recognize and understand your need for this Jesus we're speaking of. See and recognize his great love and his exceeding reward. See in him, stretched on that cross, bruised and broken, killed and enduring the wrath of a holy God for sinners.

See in that an arms-wide invitation to come and embrace him in repentance and faith. Escape the judgment to come so that you may enter the kingdom that has already come. My non-Christian friend, flee from this life.

Friendship with the world is hostility to God. To love this world is to prove that you have not come to love God. And to not love God is the most tragic of all states imaginable.

For he is a good God, exceedingly good, perfect in his love, who does all things well. And what he has determined in his wisdom and in his omnipotence and in his goodness is that he will reward those who are saved. Those who come to him in repentance and faith.

Turn from your sins, turn from this world and believe upon Christ, the Savior crucified in your place and resurrected for your life, eternal life. The kingdom pays, we should move on. The kingdom not only pays, but notice that the kingdom pays equally.

We see that in the parable, in the way that the workers are hired at different shifts. Verse 1, you get the early hires, they're hired at dawn. And they agree in verse 2 to work for one denarius.

And there in verse 3, you get those who are hired at the third hour, about nine in the morning. And there the king says in verse 4 that he will, or the landowner, that he will pay them, quote, whatever is right. He says the same thing in verse 6 to those who are hired around noon at the sixth hour.

And whatever is right, he will pay to those at 3 p.m., around the ninth hour, until we come to verse 6, those who are hired at the eleventh hour. And I, the text doesn't say they're promised anything, but you see the, you see the landowner's pattern. In verse 8, beginning with the last and going back to the first hires, everyone's paid the same wage, one denarius.

That whole picture there is a picture of people steadily entering the kingdom as God's kingdom advances. Some were gathered early at the crack of dawn, others gathered at the end of the day. When God gathered you and me, it didn't diminish the value of his reward in the kingdom to those who came in after us.

Coming late in life does not lower the pay of the kingdom. The kingdom and the gospel are to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, but both are equally rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. Some of us have followed the Lord since our childhood, praise God.

And others came to know him very late in life, praise the Lord, both equally rewarded. You could be the young Timothy, who knew the scriptures from infancy because of his mother and his grandmother's faithfulness. Or you could be that thief on the cross, who entered paradise that day with the Lord.

Both fully rewarded. So here, if you're here tonight and you're among the older persons here, don't let old age cause you to delay. Don't let a lifetime of having not known Christ be a barrier to knowing him in these days that he gives you and for eternity as well.

What a poor trade it would be to say that because for 50 years, 60 years, 70 years, I will neglect eternity. Eternity has a way of erasing time. The kingdom has a way of reversing this life as we enter into new life.

If you're here and you're in the sunset years, you may live as vigorously for Christ as if you were 20. You may live and do great things in his name as though you were just beginning in the full flower of your strength. Do not hesitate.

Come to Christ. Embrace him. You may be hired at the 11th hour, but you will receive the reward of the kingdom.

And perhaps you're here tonight and you're on the younger side of the spectrum. Don't let the illusion of time and the illusion of greater fun in this world blind you to the reality of the kingdom. The urgent reality of

the kingdom.

Let me ask you a question. If you're here and you're a teenager and you're not a Christian. Or if you're here and you're not yet a teenager, you're 11 or nine, like my daughters or seven.

Why would you give any portion of your life to serve in Satan and this world? When you may know the blessing of having saved, served Christ from your childhood. Trust us who have lived some part of our adult lives, not knowing Christ. It is not worth it.

It is not worth it to serve this world and to serve the God of this world, to say, to serve the enemy of your soul. He will leave scars on you. He will bruise you.

He will wound you. He will treat you harshly and he will lock you away in sin. Do not, for a moment, say to yourself, I have time.

Or say to yourself, there are other things that are more interesting to me. Do not, for a moment, believe that there are pursuits and joys and funds that are in any way equal to the joy and wonder of knowing Christ. Do not wait for one moment.

Use your youth to love Christ more fully. Use your young age as an advantage in knowing how to walk with Christ over a lifetime. Flee to Him, young man.

Flee to Him, young woman. Embrace Him and love Him all the days of your life. And you will have been rewarded both in eternity and in this life.

And maybe you're those who are here who are middle-aged. I'll let you decide what middle-age is. However you define it.

Maybe you're in the peak of your powers. Intellectually, you've never been sharper. Physically, you've never been stronger.

Emotionally, you've never been mature. Your career has never been better. But what are you living for? What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? It seems to me that at middle-age, I'm going to put myself in that group.

It seems to me that at middle-age, the delusions of this world can be the strongest. Why? We've got a mortgage to pay. We've got children we're raising.

There's university we need to pay for. There are all these cares and concerns that if we're not careful, choke out the Word of God. Oh, my middle-age brother and sister, my middle-age friend, and particularly if you're here and you're not a Christian, don't be deceived.

This world is not permanent. And its rewards are no rewards at all. As one more group, we ought to address thinking about this parable and thinking about those who have come in at different times.

I wonder if I could just speak to people who, when you think about the gospel, and you think about the beauty of God's love, and think about what Christ has done upon that cross, and then you think about your own sin, I wonder if there are people here who feel undeserving, who feel themselves to be unworthy of such love, who, like those workers chosen in the eleventh hour, have been passed over time and time again. I used to drive through Raleigh, North Carolina, on my way to my downtown office. And I would

pass a place where day workers would gather.

And they would gather there early in the morning, just as this parable lays out. And farmers from the county or folks who were just looking for day labor would drive up and pick up trucks and cars. And they would come, and you could see them choosing the workers they wanted.

This one looks strong, this one looks young. I remember him, he did a good job for me. And they would choose two or three, or truckload and drive off, and there would be those who were left.

And sometimes my work would have me in the car during the day, and I could come by around midday or sometime, and the crowd would be thinned out a bit, and you could see those who were left, who were pretty haggard looking, pretty shabby and downcast, had been passed over time and time again. And you could tell that they seemed to think themselves unworthy. Not so with Christ, not so with our Lord.

You may enter this kingdom and receive its reward in the same measure as those who were chosen at dawn. Your sense of deservedness is no barrier to the power of God's love and grace. The truth is none of us deserve this kingdom.

All of us were wretched, all of us were lost, all of us had forfeited any claim upon God's love in our sin. That any of us are saved is a miracle of God's grace, and a demonstration of His compassion. Oh, beloved, don't let self-talk, don't let your sense of despair hinder you from coming to know the love of Christ, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Repent of your sins, call upon His name, call upon Him, and you might be saved. Trust yourself wholly to this Savior who does not call the worthy, does not save the well-to-do of this world. But all who ever came before Him were thieves and robbers, and He in His great love wins them despite their sin.

You are not unworthy, if by unworthy you mean unlovable when it comes to Christ. Call upon His name. The kingdom pays equally to all quickly, verses 10-12, because the kingdom is a matter of God's grace.

You see there in 10-12, the hired workers who were hired first grumbled against this landowner and thought that they deserved more. They thought they had a little sweat equity into the kingdom. So they should get the larger house on the cul-de-sac.

And a dug-in pool, thank you very much. And they make their plea. It's interesting that the language of fallen man is law and works righteousness.

It's what we speak naturally. We speak it in terms of deserving and earning. Have you ever tried to learn a foreign language? Speak in a foreign language? You realize that for a while you maybe have some vocabulary, you start to learn some syntax, but even as you begin to speak the language, you're still thinking in English.

You're still thinking in whatever is your native language. You're not fluent in that language until you not only speak it, but you think it. So it is with law and grace.

These folks have not yet learned the language of grace, which is the language of Zion, which is the language of kingdom, which is opposed only to the language of works and righteousness and having earned anything and making demands upon God's love. No. Here these workers in the vineyard haven't yet come to learn to speak and to sing the songs of Zion, which are songs of grace.

This reward of the kingdom, this distribution of one denarii to each person stands as just, as right, as fair. Because God has rewarded to each one, not according to their labors, but according to His own grace, His own divine prerogative, His own ownership of all things. We see it there in verse 13.

Friend, I'm not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for denarius? Verse 14. Take your pay and go.

I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. And he asked that rhetorical question in verse 15. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? We encounter a similar argument from the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9, 10, 11.

And that section is those who were really rejecting his teaching on election and God's sovereign grace. He reminds them, hey, we are the clay. He's the potter.

So the thing forms, say to the one who formed it, why have you made me thus? What protest do we have as creatures before the creator? And here, even in this parable, the king makes it clear that what he gives, he gives because it is his right to give as he chooses. And in the verse 15 there, are you envious because I'm generous? It's a good thing to guard against, isn't it? The generosity of God to others. Driving us to covetousness and envy.

It's not the way of the kingdom. For in the kingdom, all is of grace. And in the kingdom, we discover more fully than we do even in this life.

The generosity of God. You see how the king describes himself. I am generous.

God is generous. Is he not lavish with his grace? Is he not kind in the distribution of his gifts? Is he not free with his love? What a wonderful thing to discover about God. Let's conclude with just a couple of thoughts.

We need not fear that the life of following Jesus is all cost and no pay. It is a rewarded life. Because God is a generous God.

Second, Christian. See how God's grace and generosity should level our standing in the kingdom. The kingdom isn't a place of haves and have-nots.

It isn't a place where we respect persons. James 2. The kingdom is a place where we are made brethren. As they say in the Caribbean, brethren.

Where we are made in God's sight. One family of great love. And in this sense, egalitarian.

Equal. Different roles, yes. But one rewarded family.

And see how we should adjust our expectations with regard to God's promise. He promised to do what was right in this kingdom. And shall not the Lord of all creation do what is right? And yet he'll not be committed to do more than he promises.

And we have no right to demand or expect more than he promises. We have to align our expectations and desires with what the king himself pledges to do. And for if the work is all of grace.

Christian, we cannot be proud, can we? We must be humble. The cross humbles us. Because the cross first speaks a word of condemnation.

Of condemnation of our sin. And then a word of grace. And so well to him right or right.

Come ye sinner, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Come ye sinner, humble. And five, remember and note in your own life.

God's kindness. It's a good discipline to journal. To build an Ebenezer.

We're not good at interpreting God's providences as they are happening. But we may by God's spiritual sight look back and see the secret hand of providence revealed in our own personal histories. And that may be a source to us of ever depending upon God's future grace, upon his coming generosity.

I hope you do that in your spiritual lives. And six, this rules out grumbling, doesn't it? Rather the Christian is that strange being who is now given opportunity to give thanks in all things. Knowing his reward.

And seven, the thought of God's unfairness to us must be fought, must be rejected. That's from the enemy of our souls. God is never unfair.

In fact, he's always better than fair. He is to his people a generous God. We do not deserve such lavish treatment.

There's a brother named Ryan Thompson who I love dearly. He's a weird kind of guy in one sense. He's always happy.

It's sort of aggravating sometimes. But he's always happy. And he walks around smiling, sort of hangs his head to a tilt.

And he walks around with a smile. And you ask him how he's doing. And he says, better than I deserve.

Isn't that the truth of every Christian? God has treated us better than our sins deserve. He has not been unfair to us and never will be. And we may come to then humbly acknowledge as in verse 15, God's rights, his rights as creator and ruler to govern the universe as he pleases.

And we may see that fighting that rule only hurts us. But because he's good, he rules in his goodness. So that bending and taking his yoke upon us is to enter into his grace and to be driven by his love.

And finally, we should not let God's kindness to others ever harden us. It's an indication of a kind of jealousy or pride, a kind of self-righteousness. Because what you and I have is an act of God's grace, we must say we don't deserve it.

So we can't act as though others are even less deserving than we. There are those who get all worked up about jailhouse conversions, about the thief on the cross. Can a man who's been a murderer pray just before he dies and enter into the kingdom of heaven? Can someone who has lived an atrocious life at the moment with their last breath become a Christian? Is that fair? Beloved, if you know like I know, every conversion is a deathbed conversion.

We were all dead in our sins and the wrath of God abided upon us until we were snatched away by Christ and brought from death to life. Praise God that he saves anyone and that the deathbed is no barrier to his power. Praise him.

Praise him. Praise him. Let's praise him together in prayer.

Our Lord and our God, wondrous things of thee are spoken. Lord, we have been looking into your word and we have seen there things too wonderful for us. Lord, we just marvel at your grace.

We praise you for your glorious grace. We thank you that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, not of works, O Lord. For we surely would have boasted before you and we surely would have boasted and died and suffered judgment in our pride.

We thank you for removing every ground of self-reliance and every ground of self-dependence and every ground of human pride and establishing your kingdom and your salvation upon your generosity alone. So we humble ourselves before you and we praise your matchless name. We thank you for the joy of your salvation.

We thank you for that reward that is coming. We long for that day when we shall hear you say, well done, good and faithful servant, share your master's joy. We just want to be more fully in your presence.

We want more of heaven in us even before we're in heaven. We desire, O Lord, we desire to commune with you, to rejoice in your goodness, to praise you all of our days and to see others enter into this reward. So by the power of your sovereign spirit, we pray that you would fall upon us now.

O Lord, that you would build up your people, that you would convict and convert sinners, that you would extend your kingdom yet more. Indeed, we pray for a revival in Canada. Lord, we pray for an outpouring of your spirit.

We pray for an enlarging of your converting work so that by the thousands in cities and provinces, men would be gathered in and women would be saved and children would bear fruit of holiness, faith in your son. Long has this land stood, stifled, hardened. Long have there been quarters in this land and peoples in this land who have been like granite before your grace.

O Lord, cause your word to fall like a hammer. Break up the barren soil. Change hearts.

Save souls. Show your power. In the wonder of your grace we pray.

In Jesus' name.

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