

Sermon on the Mount Part XXII

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[0 : 00] Matthew 6, verses 5 through 15. When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men.

Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret.

And your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

So do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray then in this way.

Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

[1 : 23] Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. On the surface, this seems like an exceedingly simple passage of Scripture.

And it is frequently referred to as such in connection with the name that is attached to it most frequently, which is the Lord's Prayer. But there is nothing simple about it.

And I'm going to say something at the outset that will probably shock some of you right down to your toenails. And you will think, well, Marv, this time you've gone too far. This is really over the top.

[2 : 39] What we have here is not a Christian prayer. It is a prayer that is said by Christians all over the world for centuries and continues on.

It is not a Christian prayer. How can you say that? There isn't anything more Christian than the Lord's Prayer. Yes, there is. This is the pattern for a Jewish prayer.

I'm deliberately letting that sink in. I know that's a bitter pill for some to swallow, but it is the absolute truth.

And if I didn't believe it, I wouldn't be teaching it. For starters, if you will look at verse 7 of what was just read in Matthew chapter 6.

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do. Who were the Gentiles?

[3 : 51] The Gentiles consisted of anyone who was not a Jew. If you were not of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are not a Jew.

If you are of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are a Jew. Everyone who isn't is a Gentile. And our Lord makes a sharp contrast here in talking to his Jewish brethren.

This Sermon on the Mount was delivered to a considerable number of people. We don't know exactly how many. But it may very well have been in the thousands.

And they would have all been Jews. Now, there may have been a Gentile or two who just wandered in and wondered what all was going on. But the vast majority of the people in the whole population were Jews.

And all of the information that Christ is dispensing regarding the Sermon on the Mount is all intended for his then present Jewish audience.

[4 : 58] None of this is addressed to us today as believers. However, it is all addressed for us.

There are precious abiding principles in the Sermon on the Mount, just as there are all through the Old Testament, that are not written to us, but they are for us.

And there is a huge distinction because when you understand that they are for you rather than to you, that means that there are truths in it that need to be spiritually applied, and they are valid and valuable for every dispensation no matter who you are or where you're living.

And we find a number of those, and we try to extract them from the passage and make examples of them as we go along. But this particular prayer that is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer is in reality a model prayer.

It is a sample prayer that consists of items that were to be included in the typical Jewish prayer of that day.

[6 : 07] And our Lord is conveying this to these people. Now, I want you to notice, and we'll just begin working our way down through here. And by the way, this is our, I think this is our 22nd message on the Sermon on the Mount, and we're still in chapter 6, and I had hoped to take all three chapters in about 10 sessions, but we know that's not going to happen.

And yet, there is so much in here that is so valuable for us, and I think we'll see some of that today. But we're going to be talking about the subject of prayer. And let me tell you, there are few things that are so utterly simple, and at the same time so profoundly complex as the subject of prayer. I shared with you in our last session some conclusions that I personally have come to regarding prayer, and the longer I live, the more convinced I am that they are valid, and they do often go contrary to a lot of the typical thinking regarding the subject of prayer.

I don't understand very much about prayer. I see it as a valuable tool that God has given His people, but it is so prone to misuse because what most Christians want to do, and by the way, people who are not Christians are not even on praying ground.

They do not have any right to come boldly, to access the throne of God in time of need, because Jesus Christ is the mediator, and our prayers are offered to God through our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 53] And someone who is not in Christ is really not on praying ground, even though they may not know that. And I know you'll find people who are not believers who will say things like, God answered my prayers, etc., etc.

And I'm not disputing with them, but I think in most cases they're just sadly mistaken. The subject of prayer, as so many Christians use it, is designed pretty much to change God's will to comply with their will.

Most Christians, when they pray, they have this wish list, and they want God to do this and do that and do several other things and answer this prayer this way.

And we've all been there and done that, and I think that's a very common thing. It's a very immature way of approaching our Heavenly Father, because as I concluded in our message last week, if God has a will, a desire, a position regarding anything, you would be really foolish to want to change that.

And so many times we pray in an effort to get God to do what we want Him to do our way, to answer our prayers, to bend the will of God.

[9 : 08] And I've even heard things like this. If you get enough people praying about something, so people start a prayer chain, they get on the prayer network, and they think that if you have a hundred people praying, God may answer, but if you have a thousand people praying, He has to answer.

He just can't turn to it. Well, listen, God is sovereign, and it doesn't make any difference how many people are praying about whatever they're praying for. God is going to do what He deems best for whatever situation.

And that may comply with what you want, or it may not. But how could anyone in their right mind be willing to superimpose their will upon God's will, even if they could?

So prayer was never given for the purpose of trying to make God see things your way. The Apostle Paul found that out when he prayed regarding his thorn in the flesh, and he asked that God remove this thorn in the flesh because it somehow impeded his ministry, it curtailed his effectiveness, and it was certainly a legitimate prayer that God would remove.

And we don't even know what the thorn in the flesh was. But it somehow hindered him and stymied him in some way that is never explained.

[10 : 23] And Paul prayed and asked God to remove that thorn in the flesh, and was probably quite confident that he would, because that would likely increase his effectiveness, etc., and so on.

And God said no. So Paul prayed again. Maybe you didn't hear me the first time, Lord. I've got this problem, and I'm trusting you to remove it. And I'm praying and faith-believing and all the rest of it. And God said no. And after the third time, he couldn't figure out what was going on. And God simply, as much as told Paul, I'm not going to remove the thorn in the flesh.

You're going to continue on with that. But what I am going to do is give you an extra measure of grace that you may be able to bear it.

Now, that is the wisdom and position of God. That was not Paul's position. And, you know, if anyone ought to be able to go to the Lord God Almighty with the assurance that their prayers would be answered, I would think it would be a believer, a saint of the stature of the Apostle Paul.

[11 : 32] But God told him no, too. And it wasn't that God couldn't. It was that God knew what Paul really needed. And it wasn't the removal of that thorn in the flesh.

It was the grace to bear it. That's the way it is for you, too. God knows your needs.

And he is not concerned with your wishes. God loves you so much and in such a way that he is more determined to give you what you need than he is what you want.

And if you will just use the analogy of a parent-child relationship, which God does many times, what kind of parent would be a responsible parent if they gave their child whatever they wanted?

I can guarantee you one thing. You're going to raise a real spiritual brat and then inflict them on humanity. But you exercise diligence and concern and love not only by what you provide your child, but what you withhold from your child.

[12 : 47] Because you really know what's in their best interest. They don't. They only think they do. And they only know what they want. But you who have the wisdom and the experience and the responsibility, you know your child's needs far better than your child does.

Do you think it's any different with our Heavenly Father? Of course not. We can't see any further than the end of our nose. Yet we are convinced that we know what we need and we pray accordingly.

And sometimes God says, No, I'm not going to give you that. And then we begin to wonder, What's going on? And am I a second-class citizen? Or am I not as spiritual as I am? Or what's so on? And this Sermon on the Mount that is given here is designed to be for the Jewish audience that existed at that time to whom the Lord was speaking.

It is designed to be a model or a pattern for prayer. It is not, repeat, it is not to be a prayer to be memorized and repeated verbatim over and over and over again.

[13 : 57] And yet this is exactly the way so many Christians use it. And even within this context, he tells us, Do not, when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

Now, what is contained in the model prayer here is not meaningless. It's meaningful. But to say it over and over and over again just by repetition completely misses the point and it does a great disservice to the forbidden part of the context.

He says, Don't do that! So what do we do? We go right out and do that, memorize the prayer, and churches, ad infinitum, don't consider themselves of having had a service unless the Lord's prayer has been repeated at least once.

And they are falling right into this very thing that the Lord prohibited. I don't understand why they do that. I do know that it is ingrained in a great many denominations and churches as an absolute necessity.

And you are not spiritual, you are not Christian, you are not a church, you are not this, you are not... If you don't incorporate the Lord's prayer, and they use it every occasion that they possibly can.

[15 : 19] And it completely misses the point. So, let us dissect this a little bit. And I'll try to wrap this up so we can have a little bit of Q&A.;

In verse 5, he says, Do not pray as the hypocrites who pray publicly so as to be seen and heard of others. They stand and pray in the synagogue and on street corners.

Now, this really seems peculiar to us because most of our praying takes place in private. And that's what the Lord recommends here. But in the Jewish day, back 2,000 years ago, in the day in the dispensation in which this was written, a great deal of prayer was public.

And you will find that to be the case in most of the synagogues today. At the Western Wall, sometimes referred to as the Wailing Wall in Israel, which is the only remaining structure or edifice from the first century temple area, there is this huge wall that is comprised of enormous building stones.

Most of these are anywhere from 2 to 6 feet long and about 2 feet thick and anywhere from 2 feet to 4 feet high. Just big, massive limestones.

[16:34] And they are laid one on top of another. And each time where there is an intersection of stones, there is, of course, a slight crack in between the stones.

Not a very big one, but just a crack, maybe like an eighth or a quarter of an inch apart where the stones don't completely flushly meet. And if you ever go to the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall, you will see all over that wall little scraps of paper.

many times folded, some of them, and they write out their prayers in Hebrew and then they fold the paper up and stick it in those cracks.

And there are thousands, probably tens of thousands of little pieces of paper slipped in between those cracks all along the Western Wall. And of course, anyone who wanted to would take them out, but you wouldn't consider that appropriate because these are the written prayers of people who petitioned God for whatever and they stuck them in those cracks in the Wailing Wall there.

And as the Jews stand there praying, you can see the Orthodox and the Hasidim because they're easily identifiable. They have the garb, the black, and the curls in the front, etc. And they stand there with a prayer book.

[18:00] repeating the prayers out of the prayer book. And as they pray, they are in a monotone-like voice and they are bending forward like this and they pray and they read another prayer and then they bend at the waist like that.

And there are hundreds of them there depending on the day in the Jewish calendar. There may be hundreds there praying that way. And they bow in like that at the waist and you can see that and you've seen it on camera many times.

That is in response to a verse in the Psalms that talks about acknowledging and praying to God with the whole body and they move the body like that because they believe that that's to be in fulfillment of that.

And a great deal of the praying that goes on there of course is public and each one is mumbling and muttering under his breath and the one right next to him is reading a different prayer from the prayer book, etc.

and this goes on sometimes for hours and hours during the day depending on the official time of the Jewish calendar. And a lot of that praying is in public.

[19:07] And the synagogue prayer is often in public and you see pictures, I'm sure you've seen it many times on TV of the Muslims in their prayer posture and they kneel down and they put their forehead on the floor and their hands out in front of them and most of that praying is a public kind of expression also.

This was common in the day of our Lord and the rabbis would go out and stand on a street corner out in the open in clear public where people are passing by and conducting business etc. and they would stand on the street corner with their prayer book reading their prayers muttering their prayers sometimes for a couple of hours. And the Lord makes it quite clear here that these are simply doing this as an outward show.

And he says don't do as the scribes and Pharisees do because they do it to be seen of men so that men will honor them so that men will praise them so that men will say I saw Rabbi so and so in the corner the other day and I was going to market and I was going for two hours and he was there praying and when I came back from market a couple of hours later he was still there praying oh my what a godly man and Jesus is saying he's not godly at all he's suffering from approbation lust approbation lust is a deep desire to win the appraisal and acclaim of others that's what they live for is to be seen of men acknowledged made much over exclaimed to be very holy and Jesus says you know what they've gotten all the reward they're going to get they won't get any from God because they've already gotten all they're going to get from men it is just done for a show that's all and deep seated in the heart of this individual is a desire to be noticed to be acknowledged to be approved of to be admired nothing has changed this still goes on today people do all kinds of bizarre things in an effort and what they are really doing on the inside what they are really doing is they're saying will somebody please pay attention to me will somebody please notice me will somebody give me some

praise this is somebody who is frequently starved for attention and they don't understand that their search for significance really lies in who they are and what they are in God's sight not in what men think of you they completely miss the point but so much of this goes on today and it's an innate thing it's part of the human ego and it has been in every generation this way and here our Lord is simply exposing it and he says they have their reward in full when you pray go into your inner room when you shut your door pray to your father who is in secret and your father who sees in secret will repay you and it's just between you and

God that's all it needs to be just between the two of you I remember hearing an anecdote one time a family was gathered for a Thanksgiving meal and they had some of the family had been teaching their children to pray and telling them about prayer and telling them how to return thanks for meals and so on so these families children grandchildren cousins etc.

[23 : 03] got together around this big Thanksgiving table and they were going to honor this little four-year-old boy who was learning to pray and the grandfather turned to him and said called him by name and said would you like to return thanks for our Thanksgiving meal today and this little four-year-old just beamed with joy and he bowed his head and started praying and he was hardly audible but he went around the table and he asked God to bless the turkey and bless the gravy and bless you know all this real cute like and when he finished his mother leaned over to him and called him by name and said that was a very nice prayer honey but a lot of the people here at the table couldn't hear you and he said well I wasn't talking to them now that sounds very childlike but it's also very true sometimes people want to show off their oratorical skills and they pray and they wax eloquent and they use all the

King James English the these and thou and all the rest and it's to simply gain the admiration of people who say wasn't that a beautiful prayer well that's not the purpose of prayer is to be beautiful or to impress people with the eloquence I read an anecdote of D.L.

Moody he was the Billy Graham of his day and he was undoubtedly a great man of God and a great evangelist and when he would go to a certain city to hold one of his revival meetings there would be several thousand people there and very often he would call on a local clergyman to come to the platform and lead in prayer and this was no difference so he was having this meeting and he called on the right reverend so and so from such and such a church would you come please and lead us in prayer and ask God to bless our meeting tonight and the going forth of his word now there he had already specifically requested what he wanted to pray for so this pompous old preacher stood up and he began praying and he waxed eloquent and he was praying here and he was praying for the missionaries there and he was praying for that need there all around the world he just went on and on and on and people were wondering what's going on here you know and he prayed on with great verbosity and great eloquence and great elocution and great vocabulary and he just kept waxing on and on and finally finally

Moody had enough and he came up and took the platform and said while our dear brother continues praying let's all turn to him number such and such and so that's what it takes for some people you know they just have to show off their skills and it's all done to be admired by people and they are prayers that never get to heaven it's done just for show that's all too bad don't use that and they pray they suppose that they will be heard for their many words so public prayers should be brief now if you want to pray if you want to spend an hour two hours in prayer fine but you don't have to subject someone else to it make it just between you and the

Lord that's the key here you can pray all you want to have you ever been in a church service I'm almost ashamed to say this but I've done this where the pastoral prayer was so long you're sitting there with your head bowed and your eyes closed and the next thing you know you're about to enter la la land and doze off just because it goes on and on and on and sometimes the prayer is in a monotone and it's almost like something that lulls you to you know we ought not to subject people to that public prayers ought to be kept short and if you want to pray for hours on end I'm sure God appreciates that you just get in private and you pray as long as you want to pray and that's fine prayers ought not to be said prayers ought to be prayed and not said

[28 : 00] I've often said Christians should not say prayers but Christians should pray and there's a huge difference saying of prayers just doesn't amount to a hill of beans and God is not impressed they just rattle off prayers so so selective so selective in accordance with his own wisdom in the prayers of the answers and the way he answers them and as

I go through scripture I try to find a pattern to make things fit into so you can be pretty sure and safe that you're on praying ground and I can't find that and here in the Sermon on the Mount what we do find is well for instance let me just run through these quickly with the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said pray then in this way he doesn't mean pray these exact words and repeat them at infinitum that's not what he's saying what he's saying is as you pray use this as a template as a guideline here are some suggestions of things that should be included in prayer and at the top of the list is the acknowledgement the recognition of God's holiness and purity and his fatherhood verse nine pray then this way use this matter use this form this is a pattern or a form our father who art in heaven that recognizes

God's fatherhood and God's transcendence it reminds us he is utterly imminent as a father he is near as a father and he is also transcendent he's in heaven God is both imminent that means near at hand and transcendent that means far removed and this recognizes the character and nature of God as does a recognition of God's holiness and purity hallowed be thy name that is an admission of God's holiness and purity his name is hallowed and when he says thy kingdom come do you know what that means in a prayer like this what that signifies it signifies thy kingdom come this is God's job one you realize that this is

God's ultimate priority it is for the kingdom of heaven to come to earth and this is a prayer that is at the top of God's agenda to do list this is it to bring in this kingdom because when this kingdom comes when Christ establishes this kingdom all is going to be right with the world and all the wrongs are going to be made right he is not going to turn the world upside down that's what it is now he's going to turn the world right side up this is a recognition that this is God's job one this is his number one objective this is why Jesus Christ came it was to lay the foundation and provide the basis for God removing reversing the curse and bringing in the kingdom of heaven come to earth that is still his number one agenda item and he's going to bring it to pass this is a recognition of that and then when he says thy will be done that means this is

God's absolute prerogative that God's will be done not yours not mine not even the sons not even the will of Jesus this is why he concluded his prayer in Gethsemane the night he was betrayed father if there is any way possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done Jesus is acknowledging that his father has a will and it can't be improved upon and Christ is as much as saying I wouldn't even try to improve upon it and we realize our Lord was speaking out of his humanity not out of his deity and when he says in verse 11 give us this day our daily bread all that is is a reminder that

[34 : 32] God is our resource for everything God is the giver of every good and perfect gift he makes his sun to shine upon the righteous and the unrighteous he provides rain for the righteous and the unrighteous God is the source of it all and that's just an acknowledgement of that and then verse 12 forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors we all stand in need of forgiveness and this is a conditional forgiveness here it's made very very clear that if one to whom Jesus is speaking in this audience in the Sermon on the Mount is unforgiving of someone who has wronged them and has apologized and sought their forgiveness and they said nothing doing I'm not going to forgive you Christ is saying the Father isn't going to forgive you now this really flies in the face of what we read in

Colossians chapter 2 where the apostle talks about God has forgiven us all trespasses what do you do with that that just looks like a blanket forgiveness but what we have here in this so called Lord's prayer is clearly undeniably a case of conditional forgiveness he is saying if you won't forgive your brother God will not forgive you well how do you square that with what Paul said in Colossians 2 God has forgiven us all trespasses how can that be and you know this is what leads some people to say oh you know there are contradictions in the Bible well I'll tell you what there are contradictions between dispensations because they're supposed to be some things are for one dispensation and they won't work in another other things carry over from one dispensation to another because the principle is broad and it covers every contingency but this is really different and this is another thing that leads me to say listen this is not a

Christian prayer this is a Jewish first century model prayer and Christ isn't saying he is not saying when you pray repeat after me these words our father that's not what he's saying in fact he is saying don't do that and then we turn right around and do it it's amazing and as I've said don't think of starting a campaign to change churches minds on this because you talk about World War Three that would be World War Three the only thing that dies harder than typical traditions are religious

traditions they don't die at all they are maintained no matter what so what we do have by way of Christian prayer and Christian forgiveness doesn't even take place until there are Christians and there are no Christians in Matthew Mark Luke and John there just aren't they are Jews they are Jews out of which out of which Christianity is going to come but it isn't back here so when we come to Colossians 2 and I think it's verse 13 and Paul talks about in Christ we have been forgiven all trespasses that's a blanket that is a blanket and it isn't you have been forgiven all trespasses if you forgive any who have ever trespassed against you I can't even think of everybody who's trespassed against me much less forgive know all of them you don't either so what is he saying he is saying that in Christ there is the robe of righteousness provided there is full and free forgiveness based upon the finished work of Christ and you are covered with a blanket of God's forgiveness he has forgiven us all trespasses in Christ and if you don't buy that you depreciate the value of what Christ did on that cross he left nothing unpaid when he said it is finished he meant it the whole thing was finished nothing is left undone but was that true back here in Matthew 5 and 6 and 7 of course not what is it that made that blanket forgiveness available death burial and resurrection of Christ that's not here that's upcoming don't put the finished work of Christ in the Bible where it doesn't belong because it doesn't fit put it where it does belong that's where and when it happened and the effects of it the results of it the benefits of it didn't occur until after the fact after the resurrection then these things are implemented and before that time this is all history and yet it's a very difficult lesson to communicate to people some of you right now are struggling with it and

[40 : 16] I understand that because I struggled with it too when I first heard it I thought this can't be this can't be but the more I studied it the more I'm convinced this is the way it is there is a progressive unraveling of doctrine there is a doctrine it is moving as you come through the Bible and if you try to make it stagnant at one particular place and apply everything else to it it just won't work you will end up with all kinds of contradictions that just don't make sense but when you see the line of progression that it is something unfolding and as the decades went by God is revealing more and more and more of his plan and program it all fits like a hand in a glove but if you don't see it you'll be as confused as I was before I came to see let's let's hasten on through this verse 13 is a very problematic translation do not lead us into temptation could

God do that of course not then we've got a translation problem here that really would be a contradiction and you know what it would be a contradiction with it would be a contradiction with James 1 13 James says let no one say when he is tempted I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself does not tempt anyone but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust and here the text says do not lead us into temptation I think probably a better rendering would be something to the effect do not allow us to be led into temptation it is not prayer asking God not to lead us into temptation of course he simply cannot do that and then verse 14 if this is a condition it's predicated upon something you do if you forgive men for their transgressions your heavenly father will also forgive you this is a condition but if you don't then your father will not forgive your transgressions you have got to keep this where it is where is it it is under the mosaic economy it is operating under the law of

Moses Jesus Christ did not operate under the laws of the dispensation of grace he operated under the laws of the dispensation of Israel and all that we have here in the gospels Matthew Mark Luke and John is the functioning of our Lord Jesus Christ while he was here on earth as a full fledged obedient observant Jew not as a Christian in fact in some quarters this statement will be looked upon with real wrinkled brows when you say people people automatically assume that Jesus Christ is the best Christian that ever lived not so he was not a Christian at all he still isn't Jesus Christ is a Jew he is not a Christian Christ is not qualified to be a Christian a Christian is a forgiven sinner you can't put

Christ in that category he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him Christ was an observant loyal Jew without spot and without stain he was not a Christian and Christians didn't even come into being until halfway through the book of Acts when at the city of Antioch they were first called Christians and even then guess what it was not a complimentary term it was a term of derision it was a derogatory term to be called a Christian today it's probably looked upon as complimentary but it wasn't then you were considered if you were a Christian are you a loser today well maybe things are reverting reverting back to that the way Christianity is being treated in many quarters today but I just want to close with some of these

some of these perplexities that I've shared with you man ought always to pray and not to faint we know that we know that the righteous fervent prayer the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much and

James tells us and we know that when Peter was in prison back in Acts chapter 12 and prayer was made for him without remember that and an angel appeared and took the shackles off of Peter's wrists and feet and said get up Peter we're getting out of here and the prison guard was asleep and the angel led Peter outside the gate of the prison and they went to the house of a girl named Rhoda and all the brethren were inside praying for Peter and what do you think they were praying for Peter for probably for his release or maybe praying that his life would be spared because he probably was going to be executed Herod had already killed James the brother of John and saw how much that pleased the Jews and got him in good with the Jews so he was probably going to execute Peter too and the Lord sent an angel and

[46 : 04] Peter was released miraculously but do you know a few years later Peter is going to be arrested again but there won't be any miracle Peter is going to die crucified tradition says upside down and when Paul when Paul appeared the first time before the Caesar of Rome apparently he found no cause for charging him and he released him and Paul having spent a couple of years in his own hired villa as the book of Acts records when it ends he set free he is a free man he goes out and begins preaching the gospel again and apparently with great success but when persecution heats up even more he is arrested again this time he's not put under house arrest this time he's in Rome and he's in the

Mamertine prison and there won't be any release there won't be any miraculous earthquake like there was with the Philippian jailer where he's set free this time he's going to be executed what do you make of that where was God why didn't he deliver him after all Paul was a choice servant he probably had a lot of miles left in him that he could have gone on preaching that gospel and God could have spared his life but he allowed him to be beheaded by a Roman soldier why would God do that all I can say is God has a perspective that we don't have and he knows what he's doing even when it seems like he doesn't he does he knows exactly what he wants to accomplish in your life and how he's going to get you to where he wants you to be and you know something more often than not it's going to hurt because we don't grow through pleasure we do not grow through pleasure we grow through pain we go through the spiritual disciplines wow see why

I don't understand much about this it is very perplexing and Paul says in Romans chapter 8 he makes this statement that just kind of floors me Paul said we know not what to pray for as we ought what are you kidding me if there is anybody who ought to know what to pray for it ought to be the man that God used to write one third of the New Testament I think good grief Paul if you don't know how to pray or what to pray for how am I supposed to know well the truth of the matter is you don't you just think you do so when you go to prayer my suggestion is this just be overwhelmed with the gratitude to God for what he does and why he does it even though you don't understand it just thank him and praise him and trust him and say Lord whatever you have for me that's what

I want don't care what it is because if you send it it's the very best thing for me no matter how much it hurts can you do that and we go through scripture and we see you know when you focus on the Old Testament you get into a lot of physicality a lot of materialism a lot of the concrete everything is concrete in the Old Testament and when you get into the new and I'm not talking about the gospels now because the gospels are part of the Old Testament that's all under the Mosaic law and the new did not come in until after the death burial and resurrection of Christ and it's in the book of Acts so when when when you get into the Old Testament and the gospels you find so much emphasis upon the physical and the miracles and these are all physical miracles healing etc that's about as physical as you can get but when you get into the

New Testament there is a progression that is unmistakable but it is there and the emphasis moves from the physical to the spiritual and if you miss that you miss something really important do you think that Paul didn't have aches and pains and we know he had his problems with the with the thorn in the flesh but he had other physical problems too and yet I can't find any place read Paul's prayers read Paul's prayers in Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians and they are just loaded with I thank my God and I thank God upon every remembrance of you they are saturated with thanksgiving and there is almost no emphasis at all upon the physical trophobus have

[51 : 34] I left at Miletus sick what sick yeah sick probably probably too sick to travel so why didn't Paul heal him trophobus take up your bed and walk feel good again let's get on the boat and get out

of here you don't find very much of that but you do find some I mean Paul was bitten by that venomous viper and everybody expected him to fall over dead and he just kind of shook it off in fire and went on about his business so we see instances of miraculous deliverance and we see instances where the deliverance is denied and someone said that God always delivers sometimes he delivers from death sometimes he delivers through death but he always delivers so we see some real puzzling things here about prayer and I've lived long enough in the

Christian life to know I don't know very much about it but I know that God is worthy of being thanked thanks to God for my redeemer and that line in that old Swedish hymn says thanks for all thou dost provide and thanks for all thou dost deny wow to me that's we've got lots more and I've exhausted my time I've exhausted your time too and we don't have time for Q&A; so bear with me next week I'll try to work it in no next week Dennis will be here Dennis will be here so anyway put this on hold for a couple of weeks and we will revisit it the subject of prayer and if you've got back there and you don't have to sign them if you don't want to it doesn't matter and we'll do our best to address them thank you for being here this morning pray with me please father more than anything else we who have been recipients of your great grace and love need to have a really thankful spirit thanks be unto

God for his unspeakable gift we need to be a people who are so overwhelmed with gratitude that it just exudes from our very being and makes others who do not have it or know it jealous for what we have that they might want it to and most of all we do thank you for that unspeakable gift that you provided through your son the Lord Jesus we just can't imagine you being willing to surrender him for us but you were and we are so glad as we continue on with this subject and the sermon on the mount we trust you will use it to stimulate and stir us to further study and most of all that you will increase our index of appreciation for a wonderful Savior in his name Amen