

# Sermon on the Mount: Love Your Enemies, Pray for Your Persecutors

by J. Glyn Owen

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*J. Glyn Owen's sermon emphasizes the biblical command to love our enemies and the transformative power of prayer in fulfilling this call.*

**Duration:** 46:10

**Scripture:** Exodus 23:4-5, Leviticus 19:9-10, Leviticus 19:33-34, Matthew 5:43, Matthew 5:46

**Topics:** "Sermon on the Mount"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the important question of how to deal with our enemies as believers in Christ. He emphasizes the significance of repentance and faith in the beginning of our spiritual journey. The speaker then focuses on the challenging commandment given by Jesus to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. He uses the example of Corrie Ten Boom, who faced her greatest tormentor from the concentration camp and chose to extend forgiveness and love. The sermon is based on Matthew 5:43-48, where Jesus teaches about loving our enemies and being children of our heavenly Father who shows love and grace to all.

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## Transcript

We take up the threads this morning in the Sermon on the Mount, where we left them down a little while ago now. So I ask you kindly to turn with me to Matthew chapter 5, a passage that begins with verse 43. You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Now we can only glimpse at this great passage this morning, but I trust the Lord helping us. We can see some of the salient factors there that apply as much this morning as at any time in the history of mankind and of the Christian Church. Becoming a godly person does not mean that you cease to have enemies.

There is a kind of notion abroad that that is so. That if you really are a godly person, then everyone will like you, everyone will admire you, and everyone will kind of pat you on the back. Well, that is born out of ignorance of history and of scripture.

The one significant answer to that is that God himself, the only good as Jesus says, God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and the world around literally hated him to the point of crucifying him. You can never in this life, in this world, experience and manifest a kind and quality of godliness or of goodness that will transform men and women to love you until they themselves are transformed by the gospel. Therefore, it is a very significant question, a very important one, how do we deal with our enemies? How does the godly man or woman who began with repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the summons of John the Baptist and of Jesus that we have in the early chapters of Matthew and of the other gospels, how is the person who begins his spiritual pilgrimage there in repentance and in faith, then proceeds to experience the grace of God along at least the most superficial level indicated by the Beatitudes, and who begins to hear the summons of our Lord to such ethical standards and norms as are enunciated in this chapter 5 that we've been looking at, how does a person of that character react to his enemies? Well, my text is the answer.

And if there was no other passage in the New Testament, there are of course, but even if there were none other, we have the answer here. It's very challenging, you will feel it, I feel it. It catches each one of us and it touches us at a raw spot because, we have to say, we fall short of it.

That is no reason, however, why we should not acknowledge our sins and seek the grace of God to do better than we have. And I trust that on this Lord's Day, the knowledge that our Lord Jesus who died on the cross for us and is risen again and ascended at the Father's right hand, we shall come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and forgiveness and grace to help in our time of need. This is the summons.

I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Two main things I want to look at. The first, very briefly, but it's necessary to come to the main section first looking at this.

Here we have a veritable condemnation of a venerable tradition in Jewish life. You have heard that it was said, says Jesus, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. That was the tradition.

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Now, in the first place, I want to say just something about the probable process by which this tradition had developed over a period of time. Now, we can't be dogmatic here, but it is suggested by a number of people that it developed in a certain way.

Where would they have heard anyone, anyone teaching that you should hate your enemies? Now, I know we do that, but even when we do, is there not something in our souls, in our consciences, which tells us it's wrong? But where would the ancient Jews of Jesus day, where would they have heard anyone bold enough to say, hate your enemies? Well, they would have heard it among the leading teachers of Jewry of Jesus day. It was actually taught. Not only had they constricted the meaning of the word neighbor to apply exclusively to the Jews themselves, so that everybody else outside became something quite different.

The neighbor was only by fellow Jew, but in some circles at any rate, they were encouraged literally to hate their enemies. And in one community in Jesus day, that lived very near the Dead Sea, this was a common saying of theirs, and I quote, love your brother, hate the outsider. Unquote.

It is really against this kind of background alone that we can understand the question which prompted Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. You remember the question. A teacher of the law asked him, what did he ask him? Who is my neighbor? You see, it had become confused, because they so often thought of their neighbors exclusively in terms of a fellow Jew.

And this man was really puzzled. The question may seem nonsensical to us, but because of this tradition, it was a very real one. How could any Jew with the Old Testament in his hand, how could he come to hold such a view as this? Well, let's say negatively in the first place, he did not get it in the Bible.

He did not get it in the Old Testament. That's important. The Old Testament does not, positively not, teach us to hate our enemies.

But more positively, it has been suggested that a number of factors were involved in the process whereby some segments at any rate of the Jewish community and leadership and those in teaching, in the authority of teacher, with authority to teach, came to believe this kind of thing. First of all, it has been suggested that this emerged because of an unjustified conclusion arising out of their evident election by God. Now, this is a danger that is still present in the Christian church.

If you know that God has chosen you to be a Christian, and I trust you do, but if you know that God has chosen you, then it is possible for that soul to react, for you so to react to that that you say, well, I must be better than others, and he must have chosen me because he saw something in me that he didn't see in other people. Now, this is a false and unjustified reaction, of course, but this is what happened way back here in New Testament times and before. Many people felt because God had chosen them, so evidently chosen them, well, he must have seen something special in them that he didn't see in anyone else.

Now, God, of course, rejects that. When God chose Abraham and his seed in him, Abram was a worshipper of idols, and if tradition is right, his father was a maker of idols and a seller of idols. That's uncertain, but if it is right, it makes the picture darker still.

Whatever about Isaac, Jacob was a supplanter from his mother's womb, and Esau was profane. And over and over again, one of the prophets or one of the Old Testament writers says, God did not choose you because you became numerically strong or superior in any way. It was out of his grace, not because of what you were at the time, but because of my love, my grace, my mercy for you.

That was the sole reason of my choice. Now, we cannot look with a condemning eye upon the ancient Jews without recognizing the possibility of the same thing taking place in our own hearts. That could have been one factor.

Then here is another. It is suggested that an unreasonable and unworthy reaction had emerged to the fact that the Jews had suffered so much at the hands of Gentiles. Now, this was true, of course.

They had been savagely treated by the hands of the Egyptians. They had been savagely treated by the Syrians. Yes, and by Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria.

Indeed, they had been squeezed through the meshes to powder and humiliated. And this, in turn, had in measure generated a hatred of those who were non-Jewish, so that they called them dogs. Well, that may be so, but there is one other thing that I want to mention or generate because it comes up right in this context.

And that was they had an untenable attitude to Scripture. You know, my friends, you and I can go wrong anywhere if we do not wisely, carefully, and consistently read and expound and understand the Scriptures. Reading the Scriptures is not adequate.

We must understand the Scriptures, and we must take all the Scriptures, and we must be loyal to them. You see, they had come, so many of them, to play ducks and drakes with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. For example, in this context, we have a quotation.

You have heard it said, you shall love your neighbor. Now, that is a quote from Leviticus chapter 19, but you notice it's a quote and it misses something out. What does it miss out? If this were a Sunday school class, I would like you to put your hands up.

I won't ask you to do that. But you see, they've left out two crucial words from Leviticus 19, and you can't do that with the Word of God. Jesus said, you must love your neighbor, not period, but qualified as yourselves.

And the neighbor is not just your fellow Jew, it includes the alien, it includes anyone that comes among you. But you see, they missed those words out. You and I can do exactly the same thing, and it can lead to all kinds of trouble.

But not only that, they had elevated something that had no basis in Scripture, to assume an authority which they gave to the Scriptures. They added to that command of Scripture, that we were to love your neighbor, they added this to it, and hate your enemy. You be careful of those who add to Scripture.

Intentionally or unintentionally, it makes no difference. The havoc wreaked is tragic in both cases. Hate your enemies.

Now, this was contrary, you see, to the whole ethos of the Old Testament. I realize, of course, that this is not commonly appreciated. People generally speak of the Old Testament and of the God of the Old Testament as a God who is nothing but hate.

Don't let me go off at that tangent, or I don't want to spend time representing that point of view this morning, but it's not true. It was contrary to the teaching, for example, of that very chapter from which I've quoted, Leviticus 19. It included the following instructions.

Listen to this. I'm quoting from Leviticus, the Old Testament, at the beginning of the Old Testament. Listen to this.

In that same chapter, and they knew the chapter because they quote from it. Listen to this. When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Don't do that, says the Lord to his people. Do not go over your vineyard a second time, or pick up the grapes that have fallen. What are you to do then? Here it is.

Leave them for the poor and the alien. My word. You leave them for the poor and the alien.

Leviticus 19, 9 and 10. And listen to verses 33 and 34. When an alien lives with you in your land, a non-Jew, a Gentile, someone from outside, a pagan, or an alien.

When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love him as yourself, for you were once aliens in Egypt.

So much about the possible process whereby some of the Jewish leaders and teachers have come to believe something like this. Love your neighbors, hate your enemies. But you hear the pronouncement by which that tradition was utterly condemned by our Lord Jesus Christ.

I tell you, over against that, I'm telling you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Two things I want to say only. I want you to notice that our Lord assumes authority over all the Jewish teachers of his day who had made, who were involved in the creating of such an impression, a false impression.

And he sets himself out as the Son of God, anointed to teach, to bring the Father's word, and to correct all and sundry. That doesn't make you popular, of course. It's one of the reasons that led him to the cross, if we follow it through the New Testament.

God spoke in his Son and he came in some measure to correct false impressions, as we have gleaned already from this great sermon on the mount, chapter 5. The other thing is the necessity that he affirms as one having authority. He went beyond the mere condemnation of hate. He insisted upon the necessity for subjects of his kingdom positively to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors.

The condemnation of a venerable tradition. Now that brings us to the exposition of an imperative requirement. Oh, let us prayerfully face this.

May God give us grace. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Be perfect, therefore.

It starts by saying love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, and Jesus brings the passage to a conclusion with another positive statement. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. And everything else is sandwiched in between those two positive statements.

Love, pray on the one hand, then be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect. Now the first thing we need to do here is to try to be reminded of the meaning of the command itself. The verb to love, *agapeo*, from which we have the now familiar word *agape*, that is the word that is used here.

Other words for love more evidently involve the feelings and the emotions. There are three of them. They all involve the feelings and the emotions of people, much more so than this verb *agapeo*, with its noun *agape*.

The others refer to the feelings, whether it imply feelings of God towards man, or man towards God, of a parent towards children, or children towards parent, or a husband towards wife, wife towards husband. Indeed, one of them has reference to the kind of feeling that a person may have for his nation, legitimate feeling, a love of nation. But one of the outstanding features of *agape* is that it is not primarily at any rate a matter of feeling, but a matter of will.

You see, the New Testament commands us to love with *agape* love, because it is a matter of will. You can, if you're a child of God, if you will. Now it all hangs upon that.

The New Testament does not command us to like people. So you can't command that kind of thing at will. You can't command an affection if it is not there.

It has to be developed, if it's coming at all, or usually it has to be rather spontaneous. But the New Testament commands us to love with a love of agape, because it is a matter of will primarily. And if we will, we can, by the grace of God.

That is, of course, if we're Christian. If you're born again of the Spirit of God, and if you have the Word of God to direct you, and the Spirit of God to enable you, and the example of Christ to look at, and the providence of God to direct your way, then, brothers and sisters, we say to our shame, there is no reason why we do not love our enemies. And so Jesus commands us to express this kind of love.

He doesn't say, you know, I would like you to do it. He commands us to do it. Now that is startling, and it is breathtaking, in its lofty and uncompromising demand.

Nevertheless, I want to say this this morning. I suppose I could skip it, but I want to say it. You know, the Old Testament had prepared the way for this.

I deliberately bring this out because of the view of the Old Testament, which is common as an unworthy book. But you read the Old Testament carefully, and read it all through, and study it, and I believe you will find that the Old Testament has prepared the way for this. Even in the passages I've already quoted from Leviticus 19, it has done so.

But let me just quote one or two other passages to you again. Listen to this, Exodus 23, verses 4 and 5. If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, now we're really back in Old Testament times, aren't we? Your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, what do you do? Well, here's the command. Be sure to take it back to him.

If you see the donkey of someone who hates you, fallen down under its load, do not leave it there. Be sure you help it, you help him that is the owner with it, even though the owner is your enemy. Now listen to Proverbs chapter 25, verses 21 and 22.

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

You see, it's that Old Testament. Didn't we hear that read from Romans chapter 12 this morning? Yes, you did. You heard it read from Romans chapter 12.

But it was a quote from Proverbs chapter 25. Paul got it from Proverbs, from the Old Testament. What I'm saying is this, you see.

The Old Testament had actually prepared the way, the right attitude of godly men and women towards their very enemies. Helping one's enemy in trouble is at least a significant step towards the lofty goal of loving him. It doesn't bring you there all the way.

Such then is the abiding requirement of God. Nothing less will satisfy him. And for good reason, because you see, God is love.

God is love. Not only love. He is holy, he is just, but God is love.

Nothing must be allowed to eclipse the reality and the wonder of that truth. I read something strange in bed the other day, not heavy, not even written by a theologian. But somebody was talking about love, not in this context at all, one of these little things that comes by post in a small envelope.

But he said something about love which really took me, took my mind, captured my imagination quite a bit. He spoke of the elasticity of love. And I quote, you know, he says, love has more stretch than any rubber band.

It extends out far beyond any conceivable length, and it draws its object all the way back to the lover. Love goes out far and brings the lover back. It is so elasticated, it'll go out and come back again.

It'll go down and bring the lover up from the depths to the heights. That's love. You know, it's true.

But now you notice that Jesus linked something with love here. There's much more that could and should be said about the command to love our enemies, but let's look at this alongside of it. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

You hear, even in political and social circles very often, you hear the words of Jesus quoted, love your enemies, even though people don't do it, nevertheless they refer to the words of Jesus as sagacious and wise and good. But I rarely hear this from political circles, not often in the church even, that Jesus linked love of enemies with praying for our persecutors. He did.

You may wonder why. Well, it's because of the very nature of love, of course. What is agate love? It is this.

It is to seek the highest and the loftiest for the lowest and the least and the unworthiest. But you see, if I'm seeking the very highest and best for anyone, I've got to go to the source of the highest and best to procure it, and that is God. I can't bring the highest and best into any life without God granting it and giving it and enabling me to do so.

So you see, you've got to go to God if you're seeking the highest and best, and that's why this loving of your enemies isn't something you can go out and do gritting your teeth. No, no, no. You can only do it as you fellowship with God in prayer and seek from God for your bitterest enemy what is pleasing to him, the highest and the best.

Now, this is reasonable, difficult, very difficult, challenging, terribly challenging. If it makes you as uncomfortable as it's made me, then it is challenging and you'll acknowledge that. But you know, it's reasonable.

Jesus goes on to show that it's very reasonable. That is, it is reasonable to require this of men and women that have come into the kingdom by way of repentance and faith. I'm repeating, but deliberately.

And having come into the kingdom by way of repentance and faith, now deepen their level of experience in accordance with the Beatitudes. Poverty of spirit and so forth, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, purity of heart and so forth, have gone deeper and deeper in their experience of the Beatitudes, and then have become salt of society and light of the world, more and more so, and then take his ethical norms and apply them to themselves. That man, that woman is growing in the knowledge of God.

And for the man and the woman that is growing in the real knowledge of the living God, this is reasonable. If your religion is only cosmetic, it's not, doesn't make sense. But if you have been crucified with Christ, and a new creature has been born in you, and you're a new man and a new woman, this makes sense.

I'm not saying it's simple. It'll never be simple. You can only love your enemies by denying yourselves.

I can only love my enemy at the expense of the self in me. But it is reasonable. And Jesus goes on to explain why it is reasonable, negatively and positively.

Actually, the order with him is positive and then negative. May I be allowed to change the order this morning? Negatively, simply to love those who love us, and to greet those who greet us, really doesn't prove anything. Now that's the negative.

Listen to what he says. Verses 46 and 47. If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brother, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? You see what Jesus is saying? What's the alternative to this? Well, of course, to love my own kind, and the people that are kind and generous and gracious to me.

But if you only love the people that show love towards you, you know that doesn't prove a thing. And Jesus illustrates it like this. You know, he says, the most hated person in our Jewish society does that.

Who is he? Well, generally, the tax collector, who was in the employ of Rome, the pagan overlord, to extract taxes from the Jews. But you know, he says, even the tax collectors love their kind. There's a community of feeling among them.

They love their own people. But what does that prove? Simply nothing. And if you only greet your brothers, some people don't even greet their brothers.

But if you come to the point where you greet your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Everybody does that kind of thing. Even pagans do that. People who know nothing about the grace of God.

There's a family feeling. They often love one another and are loyal to one another and respond in kind. You know, that proves nothing, brothers and sisters, proves nothing.

That's the negative. But Jesus doesn't confine it to that. Positively, he puts it like this, but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be the sons of your father in heaven.

He causes his son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. You do not become a child of God by loving your enemies. That's not the point.

We do not become children of God by anything that we can do, any more than we become children of our parents or became children of our parents by anything we could do. We were born, they chose to have us. You do not become a child of God by anything you can do.

You must ask and he of his grace can only bring you into the household of faith. But you prove that you are a child of God in very truth when you act in a distinctively God-like manner. You prove that you are a child when you learn to behave like your father in heaven.

You prove your pedigree. You prove your identity. You manifest to the world and to angels that you are really a child of God when you've learned to do as your father does.

Now in other places in the Bible, the stress is upon holiness. In Leviticus even, be holy for I am holy. This is another side of that coin.

Both are important. Today we're stressing this. God is a God of love.

For God so loved the world, says John 3.16, or to come back here to Jesus, God causes his sun to shine. Unfortunately we don't talk like that in this day and age, but we should as believers. We say the sun arose today.

No indeed it didn't. God my father caused it to shine. It's raining today.

We say no it isn't. God our father sends rain. You see the causative action of the Lord of the universe in all that happens.

But the point here is this of course, that he causes sun to shine and rain to fall on just and unworthy. In common grace God is all embracing. His love is all embracing.

He leaves no one out. And the unworthy, the unworthiest, are the objects of his common grace. Now this is very important.

I have to close, but this is very important. See this is a habit of God's. And if you're a child of God, you and I must learn to practice this.

God loved us when we were enemies. Many passages of the New Testament tell us that. When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, Romans 5 10.

Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies in your minds because of your behavior, Colossians 1 21 and in other places. You see we were enemies of God. We didn't want him.

We hated his holiness. We hated the kind of God he is. We wanted our own way and we loved our sins and we didn't want the God who wanted to have control over our lives.

We wanted a God we could handle, if any God at all. Do what we want him to do, of course. He must be capable of doing something that we want him to do, but not handle us, not master us.

That's why we hated him. But God loved us when we were enemies. God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth died for his enemy.

That is evidenced in a myriad places, but especially on the cross when our Lord Jesus, probably thinking not only of those that had nailed him to the tree literally and physically, but of those who had planned the whole program that had led to this particular experience of his on the cross. Those who had prosecuted and persecuted him. Father, he says, forgive them, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

He loved his enemies. And listen, if the Holy Spirit comes into your heart, the first of the fruit of the Spirit is love, agape. Now all of this says, you see, that agape love is something that is essentially characteristic of God's nature and of God's action.

And this command, though difficult, is realistic and is precious and reasonable, because what it asks us to do is just to prove our identity. It's to prove that we are the children of God, that we have something of his Spirit in us, that we have been made partakers of the divine nature, that God is our Father, that Christ is our Savior, that the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier, and the Word of God is our guide. And if that is so, it's not unreasonable to ask you to show it and to ask me to show it.

If it's not, of course, that's another cup of tea. But it's reasonable to ask us to show our identity. You go to another country and you ask for your passport.

As you go over the border, well, here it is. It's showing your passport and our passport. Is this that we love with the love of God? Just as God's agape embraced the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous, in the gifts of common grace, so will you and I prove our affinity with him by that same work of love? I conclude with this.

I'm only referring to verse 48. It's a crucial verse. Be perfect is the translation, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

I believe that whatever else it means, and it probably means more than I am going to indicate now. It means, first of all, what is signified by an underlying Aramaic term. And the underlying Aramaic term for be perfect has the nuance of be complete or be completed, which is exactly what Jesus says here about God.

God's love is all-inclusive. It embraces the just and the unjust. There is nothing in this context to indicate that God's people are to become absolutely perfect with the perfection of God.

Indeed, in chapter 6, Jesus even tells his disciples that when they pray, they will need to pray for the forgiveness of sins. And that is to go on, apparently, in according to Luke's rendering, whenever we pray, we shall need to pray not only for daily bread, but for daily forgiveness. It's an ongoing thing.

So Jesus does not envisage any of his people becoming absolutely perfect with the perfection of God in this life, beyond this life, but not in this life. We are summoned to this all-inclusiveness within our love. How far do your arms stretch around the world? How much elastic is there in your love? That was a very significant day, the most significant day in her life, she says, in one place, when Karitambum, you remember, this was mentioned in the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology here this year, but you may find it in one of her books.

Karitambum faced a man at the end of a service, where she had been speaking of the wonderful grace of God. This man came forward to her with his hand outstretched, and he said, Sister, and he wanted to shake her by the hand. And she looked at him, and lo and behold, it was none other than the very individual who had caused her the greatest pain and anguish in the concentration camp.

It was the very one who could probably be described as the beast of the concentration camp. And it was the very man who was largely, if not altogether, responsible for the death of her sister. Now it seemed like an eternity.

Karitambum went through this, what on earth am I to do? Here he is, and she remembered everything. In a flash, it all came back. What on earth am I to do with this man? And here he is, pretending to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and calling me Sister, and there's his hand.

But you see, she was a child of God. She was real. And the grace of God within her began to prompt her, and the Holy Spirit got charged.

And she found that she had to put out her hand, and she said, as she clasped his hand in hers, Brother, brother, it's hard. You've got to pocket your pride. Self has to be crucified, but this is the way of the Lord.

And you know, it is as rewarding ultimately to the person who pays the price as it is to the person who is blessed thereby, who is loved and prayed for. Because into your heart there will come a love, a peace, a joy, a grace that is nothing short of the foretaste of glory divine. God grant us the humility and the willingness to heed his word of yesteryear, of long ago, but also of today.

Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, and you will prove thereby that you are indeed the children of God, who causes his sun to shine upon the good and the evil, and his rain to descend upon the just and the unjust. He will show that you have the same attitude towards the unworthy as your Heavenly Father. You'll prove your pedigree.

You'll have assurance, rather cheap assurance. You see, Christian assurance costs you yourself. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, thank you for this day, a day of grace, a day of mercy, a day when the divine provisions are found in the wilderness of our human life, and there is manner to be gathered in the strength of which we make pilgrimage forward and capture for you the territories that remain in our earthly pilgrimage. Oh Lord, bless your people this morning. We confess to you that it finds us out and it points so many things out in experiences which are unworthy and inconsistent with your word and with your character.

Please, Lord, bring us back into line. Help us, help us to lay ourselves afresh on the altar. Help us to give ourselves.

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