

Meet Your Father

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God as our Father and understanding His great love and willingness to give good gifts to His children. It encourages believers to intensify their prayers by seeking a deeper knowledge of God's character and pleading His love and kindness in their requests. The message highlights the need to approach prayer with a mindset of knowing and experiencing the love and care of our Heavenly Father.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, John 16:26, Psalms 86:16, Romans 8:32, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Understanding God's Love", "The Power of Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

We are in the midst of an ongoing study of the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, we dealt with these five verses, and I didn't want to move on from them just yet, because I felt like there was at least one more thought that seemed to jump out at me that I felt like we needed to cover before we launch forth from here. Verses 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 is a portion of Scripture I want to read to you.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives. And the one who seeks, finds. And to the one who knocks, it will be opened.

For which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? I entitled this sermon, Meet Your Father. Meet Your Father. Now, repetition.

You know, when I'm studying a portion of Scripture, I'm constantly looking for repetition, even just as I'm doing my devotional reading. I tend to make note. If I see that something is being repeated in a book, or in a section of a book, I start underlining or circling, because obviously the author, and God through that

author, is wanting to bring our attention to something very specific.

Let me ask you this. These five verses, is there a word that gets repeated in all five verses? Do you seek in all five verses? Somebody said that. Ask.

Exactly. It's the word, ask. Verse 5. Starts, ask.

Verse 6. Wait, I'm not in the right verses here. Verse 7. Starts with ask. Verse 8. Everyone who asks.

9. Which one of you, if his son asks? Verse 10. Or if he asks for a fish. And then verse 11.

Ends with, how much more will your father who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him? And what's interesting, okay, there's no question about it. We've got the repetition of ask here. There's no question about what the theme is of these five verses.

But you know what's very interesting? If you simply isolated just verses 7 or 8, or even 7, 8, 9, and 10, you wouldn't really know who we are supposed to be bringing our petitions to. And you know what? That question about who we bring our prayers to is not automatic and self-evident, given the fact that we have a triune God. Now you may think of things that were said earlier in the Sermon on the Mount that may help you to answer that question.

But all of this becomes crystal clear in verse 11. Your father who is in heaven. And as I've said, I've entitled my sermon, Meet Your Father.

Someone says, well I pray. Someone else may want to sing Sweet Hour of Prayer. I don't know, do you sing that here? Do you even know that song? Yeah, we used to sing it in church.

Said something about it. Look, the reality is, you know what? I could do a sermon series on prayer. And I could deal with the five basic elements of prayer.

Which are what? Take a stab at them. Confession would be one. What's that? Thanksgiving, adoration, intercession.

I mean you could go through all these. And we could break them down and we could do these studies and we could basically dissect this thing. Brethren, it's possible to talk about prayer.

We could talk about prayer meetings and what you do there and how long you're supposed to pray and the urgency. We could talk about all sorts of things. And miss the most essential aspect of all.

If we really want to be men and women of God, we want to be truly growing, then you don't want to miss what I talk about right now with regards to prayer. And what it is that Jesus is actually bringing out in these last three verses and primarily verse 11. The truth is this, if we really want to be growing, if we really want to be growing in our prayer life, brethren, there is no substitute for this.

We have to know our God. And we need to be growing in our knowledge of Him. Brethren, do you realize that one of the great aspects of our sanctification is that we grow in a knowledge of who God is.

If I just isolated all that throughout the New Testament, every time it talked about the knowledge of God, I think you would be amazed by it. And just how God speaks about it. Brethren, prayer isn't a mindless performance or just a religious duty.

We've got to realize the presence of God. We've got to have some idea about the God in whose presence we are when we pray. And I recognize it's done through the eye of faith.

We're praying to an unseen God. It's an unseen Christ that gives us access. But brethren, it's this.

What will improve your prayer life is greater and greater and greater thoughts of God. That's what will motivate us. That's what will sustain true devotion in prayer and worship in prayer.

Brethren, what is worship? It comes from the old English, worth Skype. Basically, worship is when we find worth in God. And you know what? The worth of God is described to us in His Word.

You do recognize that this book is where we learn about the glories of God. It's where we learn about who He is. And I'm convinced that if there's any reluctance to pray, if there's any reluctance to be in prayer meetings, any reluctance to seek God diligently, you know what it typically comes back to? Shallow views of God Himself.

Listen, you don't want to miss this. It's your Father in Heaven who gives good gifts to those who ask Him. And the question is this.

Do you know Him? People can come to church and not have... They may have this idea that there's a God. They may have certain ideas about Him. But you know what? You don't say you know somebody just because you know a few facts about them.

God wants us to know Him. That's the question. Do you know Him? Brethren, this is a fight of faith.

The fight is not primarily a fight to believe that I'm weak. You should believe that. Why? Because it's true.

But the fight... Saving faith is not primarily about what you believe about yourself. Do you recognize saving faith is not primarily about you believing that you're saved? Saving faith is involved in objective truths that are true no matter what's true about you. And the truth is you might believe you're saved and you not be saved.

You might believe you're not saved and be saved. Scripture never calls you to believe something that may or may not be true. Scripture calls you to plant your faith in something outside of yourself.

An objective truth outside of yourself. And I'll tell you what it has to do with. It has to do with a divine person.

That's what our faith is all about. Saving faith looks outside myself. It involves the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We're talking about prayer right now to our Heavenly Father. It's impossible to have faith in a person that you don't have any knowledge of. Brethren, our faith as Christians is not mindless.

It's not a leap in the dark. Our faith is planted by objective realities and truths and facts that are set forth in this book. Brethren, we need to be people who don't just read this to knock out a chapter or two.

You're on a reading plan. You're in the McShane Reading Plan. So you've got to knock out four chapters in a day or something like that.

Brethren, what you want to do, you're better off to just deal with one verse and stay there and actually think deeply about who that God is. Now I'm not saying you should read one verse every day. You follow what I'm saying.

Brethren, do you know your Heavenly Father? Listen to this. Verses like this ought to just jump off the page at you when you're reading the Old Testament. Because why? It's the same God.

God is revealing Himself to us in the Old Testament just as well in the New. Now we may have further revelation in the New, but that doesn't cancel out the revelation of the Old. Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love.

Now you want to get that. But you see that's what we're talking about. We're talking about our Father who is more willing to give to us than we are to our children.

This is dealing with His love for us. His willingness to give to us. See, when you go about asking and seeking and knocking, the real question is, Do you really know the God you're pursuing? And He says this, This isn't about wisdom, and this isn't about might, and this isn't about riches.

Let the one who boasts, boast in the fact that he understands and knows Me. Now listen to the connection here. The psalmist says in Psalm 9, Those who know your name, that's to know Him.

The name stands for all that He is. Those that know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. Now I think there's an interesting connection.

Those who know your name are those who seek you. This verse connects those. Knowing God's name is connected with seeking Him.

And that's not a surprising connection. When I know Him, Listen, when you come to know Him as truly being a God who loves you, with an absolutely infinite love, who delights to give good things to you. When you come to understand how wise He is, how powerful He is, how good He is, how kind He is, how compassionate He is, Brethren, this ought to move us to seek Him.

The reluctance of God's people to pray, you know what that is? It's a reluctance of God's people to be in God's presence, which reveals something about our thoughts about God. I mean, listen, when you want to be around somebody, it says something about, you know, you're drawn to people. There are people you want to be around.

Why? Because there's something attractive about that. I'll tell you that there's no more attractive being than the living God. And the only reason that we would have any reluctance to be around Him has to do with low thoughts of Him.

You see, this is precisely what Jesus is driving at in Matthew 7. He wants us to know our Heavenly Father. We need propositions about God. I mean, if I could just ask you, could you talk for an hour or two just on what you know about the Father? Could you do that? Or would you basically be done in about three and a half sentences? Brethren, we need to be people that can go on and on and on because you know so much.

We need these. We need this. We need propositions about Him.

We need facts about Him. We need the information. Well, here's a fact.

Christian, this is a fact. Your Heavenly Father is more willing to give to His children than we are to ours. And that's a big deal.

Because the truth is, He's talking about all mankind. Now look, I know there are some parents that are better than other parents. But the reality is, He's saying this.

He can have all of humanity as an audience and say this. In other words, the most loving Father, the most loving Mother, God is much more willing to give than that father or the mother. And you know what? We've got good fathers and mothers in here.

I know how my heart is. I love to give to my children. And those of you that have children, you know that feeling.

And we're talking much more. You see, what God feels. That's what I want you to know about Him.

He feels something towards you. That feeling you feel towards your children when you delight to give them something, much more is how Jesus says this. Do you see that? Verse 11, how much more.

So whatever you may have, whatever you may feel, your children, your grandchildren, here's a fact. Your heavenly Father is more willing to give to His children than we are. We're dealing with that God who once said, can a woman forget her near-seen child? And you know what? That does not happen very often.

The truth is, by and large, mothers have an instinct, they will not, they will... Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? And He recognizes, well, in rare cases it could happen. He says, even these may forget. Yet I will not forget you.

How do you imagine the God you pray to? I mean, this is the thing. Prayer cannot be this thoughtless thing where we just fly in there. Brethren, you want to think about who you're coming to.

You want to think about that God. Jesus is giving us facts. Why? Because facts are really important to your prayer life.

They're really important to how motivated you are going to be to come and seek this God. He wants us to think. Christians must be thinking people.

Brethren, the world may think that Christians are just ignorant, and faith is ignorant, and it's not built on facts, and it's not built on substantive thinking. That's not the case at all. God has given us this whole book full of truths concerning God.

This is the book where He reveals Himself. Our faith is not some idiotic leap in the dark. It's not that.

It's built on realities. It's built on these things. Brethren, if we're going to know God, I'll tell you what, we need the Spirit of God to take what's said in the Word of God about this prayer-hearing Heavenly Father that we have and apply it to our hearts and our minds.

You know what Paul said? Paul said to the Ephesian Christians that he prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give them the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge

of Him. Have you ever thought about the Spirit of God that way? The Spirit of God is the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know. That's what we need.

We need God as we come to His Word to enlighten the eyes, not of our human head, but the eyes of our hearts so that we actually know who this God is. I suspect one of the reasons God delays... Think about this. Think about this.

You could say this. These verses started out with ask, and as I said last week, the mood here and the tense indicate you've got to keep asking. And then you need to intensify that to seeking.

And then you need to ramp that up to knocking. If somebody just kept asking and asking and asking and seeking and seeking and knocking and knocking and knocking and a father is not yet giving, you count that father to be reluctant to give, not really more willing to give. How many times have our children asked us for something and we gave it to them right away? But let me tell you this.

God has given you a lot of things right away. Probably most everybody here has eaten today. You see, God really is in the business of giving us lots of things all the time even when we don't ask.

But brethren, one of the reasons that God would have us persevere in prayer is you want to really think about this precisely because He wants us to know Him more deeply. Christian, if you're asking, seeking, knocking is not producing a deepening knowledge of God Himself, then you're not going to rise to those new plateaus of deepening your relationship with God as you ought. One of the reasons He wants us to seek and go on seeking and then knock and bang is because He wants us thinking about who He is.

He wants us wrestling with these realities. He wants us talking to Him. Do you approach life this way? Brethren, do you approach this next week this way? You say, what do you mean? I mean, people who determine that in the week ahead I want to know God more deeply.

Brethren, can I tell you something? Sometimes I've unexpectedly just found myself, well, Job is next in my Bible. And I find I'm reading along through Job and I'm trying to understand that conversation back and forth between his friends and Job and what argument they're trying to make with him and how he's answering them. And I'm thinking through this and suddenly Elihu starts talking and then bang, there's the living God.

He begins to speak. And I find myself lifted up into such awe and suddenly I came away from Job just thinking, wow, sometimes you just realize I don't know the God, the true God like I ought to. And you're blown away like your hair is just billowing backwards.

But brethren, there's a place to approach this week ahead. And Lord, teach me something more about yourself. If I'm reading the Psalms or I'm reading Job or I'm reading Exodus, Lord, show me your glory.

If I'm trying to figure out the mysteries of Revelation, I'll guarantee even as many mysteries are in the book of Revelation, you can find some things about God that are altogether glorious. And you know what happens? You take that deepening knowledge then and we compose our requests. See, this is what happens as we grow from asking to seeking to knocking.

It's what we should really be growing in is our perception of who God is and in that growth, that helps us to compose our prayers, our asking, the petitions that we have. We compose them in such a way that they

correspond with the things that we're learning about God. Brethren, we base this on what we know about the character of the one to whom we're making our request.

You think about the character. Just think about how the character of somebody affects how or even if you are ever going to ask them for anything. One of the songs that I love and we've been singing is John Newton's song on prayer.

Thou art coming to a king. Large petitions with thee bring. For his grace and power are such.

None can ever ask too much. But listen, that's a nice truth. But you know what you really want to be feeling deeply? Is that grace and that power need to be real to you.

Like it needs to be something you're gripped with. Well, how's that going to happen? I'll tell you how it happens. It happens, go grab a good author.

Go grab *Desiring God* by John Piper. I mean, dive in and read in Scripture. And don't just casually read over the surface.

Read Colossians and say, I'm going to try to learn everything I possibly can from this book about God the Holy Spirit or God the Father. I mean, break it up into the persons of the Godhead. See what you can learn.

Sit down with John 13-17 and just try to figure out what do these verses... Read it through one time and ask yourself, what does this teach me about the Father? Read it through again, what does it teach me about the Son? Read it through again, what does it teach me about the Spirit of God? Brethren, those kind of studies, if there's anything we ought to be learning as we read this book, it's the character of our God. Brethren, there's nothing higher. There's nothing higher than God.

There's nothing higher in our Christianity than the God to whom we worship and who has saved us. Brethren, you just think about how character inclines a response. You say, what do you mean? I say this.

I had an uncle. Maybe you had an uncle like this. I had an uncle.

He was the kind of uncle that he had a big house and a farm and he always had all number of projects going. But if you went there, you better not look like you had nothing to do. In fact, you ought to just avoid him altogether or he was going to put you to work.

Now, you would never want to ask an uncle like that for anything because he always wanted more payment back from you than whatever he gave you. Well, you don't ask somebody like that. You avoid somebody like that.

Do we ask something from somebody who's always demanding something from us? I had a friend in high school who always wanted to borrow. He was always asking everybody to borrow money but he never paid anybody back. Well, you're not going to ask him to borrow money from him because he was always borrowing from somebody else.

He never had any money. So you don't ask somebody like that. My dad.

My dad gave me some nice gifts over the years. But you know what? My dad had a good job. He worked for General Motors.

But my dad was a drunk and he squandered everything. And you know what? I didn't ask my dad for things. I lived with my mom and my stepdad.

They basically provided for me. I loved my dad. Loved spending weekends with him and summer vacations with him, Christmas vacation.

But I didn't really ask my dad for things because my dad typically squandered almost everything he had. So brethren, I had a buddy in high school. He had a mom that would give him everything.

Give him everything, even bad things. We might have a tendency to want to ask people who give us everything, good and bad. But a person like that is dangerous to ask for things.

Because a person who will give you a rock and give you a serpent is not a safe person to ask. There's lots of parents like that. I mean, Ruby and I read a book.

We were just up at Focus Publications up in Scotland and we were told about Mez McConnell. In fact, we were given one of his books. And so Ruby and I, in the evenings, read that book together.

McConnell, he lived with his dad. And his dad had a girlfriend. And the girlfriend beat him all the time.

Beat him, mocked him. If he came home with anything that the school gave him, she'd take it away, beat him in the head. Would you ask somebody like that for something? And then his own dad, his dad seemed to love him.

And the girlfriend wouldn't beat up on him when the dad was there. But the dad often put him in a home. You know what, you're not really likely to ask a dad who might put you in a home or who might leave because you don't know the reasons that he's doing this and you're asking him for things.

It might be the very thing to send him over the edge to cause him to put you back in there. You probably don't ask him. And you know what, it's very hard to ask a dad who isn't there for anything.

Brethren, I'm just saying this. Our willingness to ask people for help or ask people for something has a whole lot to do with what we know about that person and about their character. You see how much the character of a person has to do with your willingness to ask them for something.

But think about this. Think about a child who just has a very, very kind and tender father who's fair, but he's firm, he's wise, and the child just has a deep, deep assurance that that father loves him. Think about that child.

A child with a father like that doesn't fear to ask his father for things. And Christian, what Jesus is doing here is reminding us of what our father is like. He wants us to realize you have that kind of father who is very, very, very kind and tender and wise and firm and faithful to you and you need to have the assurance that he loves you.

Brethren, we often need to remind ourselves of the sheer goodness of our heavenly father. Because I'll tell you this, when people are lost, the devil likes to come along and paint just a weak, pathetic God who just accepts everybody under the sun. But I'll tell you this, once you get saved, you know what the devil likes to paint God as? Hard and cruel.

And he does that to the lost as well. He likes to really whisper in our ears, you're just a stepchild, God gives things to other people but not to you. God doesn't really love you.

You kind of have to twist his arm to give him. He's reluctant to give to you. Brethren, that's not what the Lord Jesus is reminding us.

And nothing will excite you to pray more than being fully persuaded that you have a father who really does deep down delight in you. Not just to give to you, he delights in you, his child. And he delights to give you good gifts.

I came across this quote by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. If you should ask me to state in one phrase what I regard as the greatest defect in most Christian lives, I would say that it is our failure to know God is our father, as we should know him. So you go to the text.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Remember verse 11.

Let's just supply that. Ask your heavenly father, and it will be given to you. Seek from your heavenly father, and you will find.

Knock at the door of your heavenly father, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, his heavenly father receives. The one who seeks, his heavenly father finds.

To the one who knocks at his heavenly father's door, it will be opened. Which one of you, if the son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you're then like you are, and you do give good gifts, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? Now look, this is a familiar line of reasoning. It's familiar with our Lord.

It's an argument from the lesser to the greater. This is a how much more argument. If an evil parent does good for their children, how much more will the father of glory, who's altogether void of all these evil influences, how much more will he give good gifts to his children? Now look, Jesus is not saying here several things.

He's not saying that parents are incapable of giving bad things to their children. He's simply appealing to the affection and care and nurture that the average parent, we see it all. He's just appealing to what we see everywhere.

Parents feed their children. It's very rare that you get to the case, yes, I know you can get to cases where people eat their own children. Yes, I know that kind of thing.

But he's appealing to what the average parent does for his child. He's also not saying here that the defining characteristic of Christians is that they're evil. You don't want to read that if you then being evil.

Of course, he's primarily talking to his disciples. I have no problem with that. But he is not primarily saying, I mean, his emphasis here is not, well, the primary characteristic of a true child of God is that they're evil.

You say, why would you say that? Because that's what it sounds like. Well, I would say it when you compare Scripture with Scripture. Listen to what Scripture says.

Luke 8.15 As for that good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience. That's a Christian. Or Luke 6. The good person out of the good treasure

of his heart produces good.

The evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Or Romans 15.

Paul talking to the Roman Christian says, I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness. Jesus and his apostles you can find all over in the New Testament where they describe a genuine Christian as a good person. But the defining characteristic is that we're new men, not old men.

We put away the old man. We are new men. We're new creations in Christ.

And the old things are passed away. But then that is... Basically, what's being taught here is that despite our remaining backwardness and our ignorance and our selfishness and our flesh and our imperfect love and all that is yet unsanctified in us, the truth is we do regularly love our children, give things that are good and helpful like food. We aren't typically trying to slip rocks onto our children's plates or throw serpents at them.

I hope we don't have any parents like that, serpent throwers. How much more... You know what Jesus is doing? He's attacking our disposition to believe that God is reluctant. And, I mean, what's with all this asking, seeking, and knocking? I mean, if God's such a giving God, then why all this? Why didn't He just give me the first time I asked? Sounds like God's slow to give.

Jesus says He's not. He says He gives to all that. But listen, I find this.

In the Song of Solomon, you find that the bridegroom loves to hear the voice of his bride. And, you know, if God simply gave to us the first time we asked, well, then we'd probably go quiet on asking for those things relatively quick. And He likes to hear His voice.

He really does like to commune with us. And I think if we're all honest, we are more inclined to commune with God when we're in need than when we're not. And it's really a great mercy that He doesn't just heap things on us immediately.

Peter also says concerning casting our cares on Him, humble yourselves. Brethren, one of the things is we can often feel entitled to things. We run right into God's presence.

If He just gave it to us, it'd probably bolster our pride and make us think we were entitled to that. But, you know, a lot of times when He holds off giving just immediately, it's for us to really realize I don't deserve that thing at all. If the Lord gives it to me, it's entirely going to be based on His mercy.

And then on Wednesday, I read the text from Philippians with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. You know, one of the things that can happen, give me, give me, give me. And a lot of times when there's, when God doesn't give us immediately, it causes us to start thinking.

And I'll tell you one of the things, when it's like woe is me, God hasn't given me already what I'm asking for. But you know when you get, you start thinking, you start realizing, wow, He has given me a lot of things. And you just, you start thinking about life, you start thinking about the thing you're asking for, and you start thinking about all that you've got.

And it is good that as we are praying, thanksgiving is being cultivated. God does wait for our appreciation to be magnified. But then there's this, Peter says this, His divine power has granted to us all things.

So here's God giving, He's giving to us all things, all good things, the things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him. And see, God grants all good things through teaching us more about Himself. And so, and that's really what I'm hitting on.

There are reasons why God delays in giving. But one of the primary reasons is He wants us to come to know Him more fully. Here's a verse to consider.

You may read across this one. If you've been here any amount of time, you've heard me quote this. But just think.

Don't turn to this, but this is found in John 16, if you ever want to dig it up. Listen to this. In that day, you will ask in my name.

Jesus is speaking to His disciples right before He goes to the cross. This is the upper room discourse. In that day, and that could be this day, you will ask in my name.

And we do that. We ask in His name. Now listen to this.

And I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf. Now that is just a remarkable thing for Jesus to say. Hear that again.

You will ask in my name. And I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf. It almost feels like if you just stopped right there, you'd say, what? Lord, I need you to intercede for me.

Sounds like you're advocating your position there. But listen to what He says. I don't say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.

Do you hear what He's saying? He's saying the Father Himself does not need to be persuaded to do you good. That's the point. His love for you constrains Him to give to you.

I mean, what Jesus is basically saying is this. It's not like my Father is angry with you and reluctant towards you. You know, oftentimes, this is a way like Catholicism.

With Catholicism, it's Mary that's the one that's tender towards everybody. But a lot of times people have this idea that Jesus, well, He may be soft towards us, kind of like Mary is. And God the Father, well, He's kind of brutal to deal with.

He's at a distance. He's out there. See, Jesus undoes that thinking right there.

He says, I'm not saying that I'm going to ask the Father on your behalf. He's basically saying, your Father has such a favorable disposition towards you, there's no reluctance on His part. He'll freely give what you ask.

He's stressing here that the Father will meet you in prayer. Not just because Jesus is there saying, Father, please, please, please, don't strike them down dead. Please don't do... No, nothing.

He'll meet you there in the prayer place on account of His great love that He bears on His own self for you. That's the point here. I mean, what does all this mean? It means that God is my Father.

It means He loves me. He saved me. He sent His Son.

I mean, can you imagine such a thing? It means He's interested in me. He knows me. He's watching over me.

He's making certain... Have you ever read the verse, all things work together? I mean, He's making them all work together for good. He's concerned about me. He's concerned about my growth.

He's concerned that I make it in my life, my spiritual health. He desires to bless me. He desires to help me.

He bids me to come to His throne of grace. He tells me to boldly come to the throne of grace. You know what the Lord Jesus is wanting to do here? He wants us to lay hold of these realities.

Brethren, do you realize it is utterly impossible to exaggerate the love of God for His people? But we don't know this. Sometimes we just have to stop and park ourselves and realize, God does not hate us. God has sent His Son.

And He really does. I mean, you talk about arguing from the greater to the lesser. We're doing the lesser to the greater in this verse.

But in another place, like over in Romans 8.32, He argues from the greater to the lesser. And He says, look, if God will give you His Son and He didn't spare Him, what do you think He'll do for you? Brethren, when the Bible says ask, we just need to realize who we're asking. And when we're told to ask and seek and knock, I would encourage you that the greatest form of intensification, moving from the asking up to the seeking, up to the knocking, the greatest form of just amping things up, is to put together a greater effort in the discovery of who God is.

And look, I'll grant you, a lot of times when you're studying the person of God, there are places you'll be blown away by His love for you, but there are places you'll be blown away by His holiness. You'll be blown away by His power. You'll be blown away by His hatred of sin.

I understand that. But do you understand what I'm saying? Brethren, what you want to do is you're intensifying your prayers for something. You recognize this.

Let's say you're sick. Tim, we've prayed for Tim. He's got problems with his feet.

Now, you could do this. You could ask, Father, heal my feet. Please heal my feet.

And you know what? He could go on asking. And you'll remember, this is a present imperative, which means you keep on doing it. And so Tim could keep on asking.

Father, please heal my feet. And he could just keep on asking. But if you wanted to escalate that to the next level, what you really want to do is you want to search the Scriptures.

You want to study the character of God. And you want to plead that character back to Him. And as you do, I'll tell you, something will tend to happen to you.

Because see, the more you think on who He is, the more the Spirit of God will use that to change you and to embolden your faith and your courage and your hope. And something will happen there. I mean, do you really have a heavenly Father in your own estimation that's far more willing to give to you than you are to your own children? And the thing is, if you become convinced of that, well, then you begin to plead that.

Father, as one of your beloved children, please grant me the thing that I ask. I would never give a rock to my child, and these feet feel like a rock. I mean, it feels like that, Lord.

Listen, listen to Spurgeon. When I was racked some months ago with pain to an extreme degree so that I could no longer bear it without crying out. Now, he had gout and a number of other things.

I asked all to go from the room and leave me alone. So you get the feeling. He was down in Mentone, France.

He's there racked with pain. He asked everybody to leave. He said, and then I had nothing I could say to God but this.

Thou art my Father, and I am thy child. And thou as a Father art tender and full of mercy. You see how he's taking what he knows about God and he knows these truths from Scripture, from his own experience, and he's directing them back at God.

I could not bear to see my child suffer as thou makest me suffer. If I saw my own child tormented as I am now, I would do what I could to help him and put my arms under him to sustain him. Wilt thou hide thy face from me, my Father? Wilt thou still lay on a heavy hand and not give me a smile from thy countenance? Spurgeon says, so I pleaded, and I ventured to say, when I was quiet and all the people came back in who were watching over me, he said to them, I shall never have such pain again from this moment for God has heard my prayer.

And he said, I bless God that ease came and the racking pain never returned. Now brother, I myself, I had meningitis years back. My brain swelled for about six weeks.

Excruciating pain. I remember this prayer of Spurgeon's, and I've pleaded Spurgeon's prayer, but you need to hear, I didn't just put myself in his place and plead like he pleaded only on my own behalf. No, brethren, what I did was I pleaded his love for Spurgeon.

And Lord, I mean if we're sick, if we're hurting, if we're diseased, if we have some kind of physical issue plaguing us, you can say, Father, I remember that prayer. I mean, I see how you healed our brother Charles Spurgeon. And Lord, I know I'm not as gifted as him.

I know that I may not be the man that he is, but you're a father to me just like you're a father to him. We both have the same Savior. If you give to him but you don't give to me, then I feel like I'm a stepchild.

I mean, we can read the story of Cinderella, but you know what the reality is? Lord, if you are kind and will do this for somebody else but then you pass over me, Lord, it doesn't make me feel like I have a father who is far more willing to give to me than I am to my own children. It feels like you care for your other children more than you care for me. I was just reading this morning.

The psalmist said, Psalm 86, Show me a sign of thy favor. Brethren, don't you want that? Don't you want that in this life? I do constantly. I want God to show me a sign of his favor.

And if he loves me this much, then I want to appeal to this love. And you can't appeal to this love. And God taught us to appeal to this love.

Listen to Moses. Please pardon the iniquity of this, people. According to the greatness of your steadfast love or your loving kindness.

Now hear that again. He's asking for something and he's basing it on this. Lord, do this according to the greatness of your loving kindness or your steadfast love.

I would just say this. If God teaches us through Moses, learn to pray this way. Brethren, if you really feel this, then God wants me to pray to him according to the greatness of his steadfast, that's immovable, or loving kindness.

Oh, you've got to love that word. That's a KJV. Loving and kindness put together.

But Lord, if you want me to, if you're teaching me through Moses that I can pray this way, what should your expectation be if you're asking God to do something according to the greatness of anything that's real about him? Are you going to be satisfied that the result is just unimpressive and average after you've just prayed according to the greatness? Lord, if you have a love like we're talking about, we ask you, Lord, do things. Answer our prayers that accord with the greatness of that love. I mean, look, what would the expectation be? That God is going to do something for those that are his real people that he doesn't do for others? And it is so spectacular, and it is so singular, and it is so marked, that people can look at it, and they can see it, and they can recognize it.

And I can recognize it. Brethren, we don't want to be the kind of people that walk around and we supposedly have this God that is the most high God, the almighty God, that is the shepherd of his people, and that has a love like this, and that I can call Father, and he calls me his child, and I'm told that in that day, I can pray in Christ's name, and Jesus doesn't even have to step up for me because God's love is so great. Should we be pleased? Should we be content to pray according to such greatness and grandness, and then to have nothing happen, or have it just be average? And see, that's what Jesus is teaching in all this.

No, no, no. He says you ask and you will receive because everybody that asks receives from a father like this. Now, he's talking to God's children.

He's not talking to the rebel. He's not talking to the unrepentant. He's talking to the people that belong to the Lord, and have been accepted, and have access through the blood of Jesus Christ.

That's what he's talking about. Brethren, I'll just say this. This ought to intensify your prayer.

If God wants you to pray like that, you should not be content to be untouched, unmoved, and not have your prayers answered when God teaches us to pray according to the greatness of His steadfast love. If Jesus wants us to know how great the Father's love is toward us, should we content ourselves to then not experience that love? And that's exactly what He's doing. To not experience it to the degree that Jesus says that He loves us? God forbid.

Large petitions with thee bring. Why? Because the King is your Father, and He loves you, and you're His child, and He's given us all such great and grand promises like this. Brethren, you talk about knocking.

Batter the gates of Heaven with that kind of thing. You who are the beloved children of God, again, I emphasize to you, meet your Father. Know your Father.

Know Him. And I say it again, it is absolutely impossible to overstate or embellish upon the love that the Heavenly Father has for you, and that He delights to give to you, and that He's interested in you, and He's concerned about you. And if you doubt it, if you ever doubt it, all you have to do is look at those five flowing wounds on Christ and hear His agonies as He hung on that cross, and you just remember, it is the love of the Father that sent the Son to die in our stead.

It's according to His foreknowledge. It's His plan. God chose us to be saved by the death of His Son.

He let those wounds speak. It is only utter folly that leads us to be prone to think that God is against us, especially when He's against us because He puts us in some trial. Something painful, disagreeable to us happens.

God is your Father. And one of the things that He recognizes is that trials are really for our good. And if we could see everything as they really are, we would not cower away from the trials that He brings to us.

They are so good for us, they don't feel good. But in actuality, they are good. They do such things for us that oftentimes we don't know.

It's like a parent that doesn't give their children cotton candy all the time. Why? The child wants it. They think it's good.

But the parent who is a lot wiser than them knows that that's not good. So brethren, remember. What I'm really wanting to drive home is this.

Just remember who this God is to whom you pray. Father, I pray, reveal Yourself to us. I pray that this would be a group of people diving deeper and deeper into a knowledge of the true and living God.

In all three persons, we pray that You'd reveal Yourself to us. Give us that spirit of wisdom and revelation of a knowledge of You. And open the eyes of our hearts.

Enlighten them, Lord. Show us more of Yourself. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. You are dismissed.

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