

Pray to the Father For Others

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of intercessory prayer, focusing on the posture of prayer, the need for more intercessors in the church, and the impact of prayer on the lives of individuals. It highlights the significance of praying for others, praying according to the riches of God's glory, and the power of God to answer prayer. The sermon encourages reverence, thoughtfulness, and a heart of sacrificial love in prayer, urging believers to be diligent in seeking God's presence and praying for the needs of others.

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Scripture: Ephesians 3:14, Matthew 6:6, 1 Timothy 2:8, Isaiah 58:9, James 5:16

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Description

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Transcript

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 3. Now we had left off in Ephesians 3.14. We went down through 13. We're going to pick things up and spend a number of weeks here in the last half of Ephesians 3. Well, let's read this. We'll read from v. 14 to the end of the chapter.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

For this reason, look at v. 14. For this reason, what's going on here? It's been a while. Remember with me.

Remember. You've got your face there in your Bible. You see, for this reason, and if you go back up to v. 1 of chapter 3, you see that he started the same way.

For this reason. Now, could it be that in both places he's speaking about different things? It could be. I mean, you could be having a conversation with somebody and you could say for this reason so-and-so.

And then later in the conversation, you could say for this reason and you mean another reason. And that's possible. In both cases, v. 1, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.

V. 14, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. In both cases, we might ask, what's happening? What reason? Well, just remember this with me. Back up in chapter 3, v. 1, most of your Bibles, I recognize if you've got the King James Version, it doesn't have this, but every other Bible has that double dash at the end of v. 1. Now, whether your Bible has it or doesn't, obviously it doesn't show up in the original Greek.

There's no double dash there to be found. This is put here by the translators. Why? Because they're assuming that Paul digresses.

They're assuming what you have from v. 2 to v. 13 is a parenthesis. In other words, Paul was starting to say what he says in v. 14. For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and he was going to say, bow my knees before the Father.

But you know what? In describing himself as a prisoner, he recognized that you can see it in v. 13. He recognized that people might lose heart. He recognized that he himself being in prison might create sorrow in their hearts.

And so, he digresses. He digresses to basically show them, look, this is your glory that I'm in prison. This is not a bad thing.

Don't get discouraged. Don't be depressed. Don't lose heart to the fact that I'm doing this.

And you know what? We all do this. We all at times are speaking to somebody, and as we're speaking to them and we're trying to say one thing, a thought comes into our mind that something I just said needs to be clarified, or something I just said needs some extra light, and we feel like we need to abruptly interrupt and stick it in there before we keep going. We do that.

And you know, one of the things is we sometimes think that because men are inspired, that they can't do those kinds of things. It's almost like we view inspired writers as dictating for the Spirit of God. My mother used to be a legal secretary.

And she, back in the day, this is before they have all the recording ability, she did shorthand. Anybody remember shorthand? She would have the attorney dictate to her and she would write down in shorthand. But that is not the way Scripture comes to us.

Can we allow somebody that's under the inspiration of the Spirit to suddenly interrupt their train of thought and go in another direction? I love this. It shows the nature of God-breathed Scripture. Paul can be completely controlled by the Spirit of God, and yet, the Spirit isn't just dictating to him like he's some robot.

That's not what's happening. Paul writes in such a way that his own thinking, his own writing are free and spontaneous, and yet he is writing word for word what God wants him to write. That's what happens.

Here's an interruption in Paul's train of thought, and yet the whole thing is divinely conceived and controlled. And so, what happens? You get to v. 14, and now Paul's going to go back to what he was originally wanting to say. For this reason.

It stands, we ought to ask, what reason? He says this, For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened. Now, it could be that the reason that he's... It could be, for this reason I bow my knees. Why? Because I want you to have power.

It could be that. But if you go back up to v. 3-1 when he first said it, for this reason, it's very likely pointing to what he got done saying at the end of chapter 2. It's likely that his whole reasoning is this. For this reason.

Because you Gentiles, that's been his whole argument all along. You Gentile Christians have been added to the saints of God. Because of your standing.

Go back to chapter 2. Let's just run through this really fast. V. 13, they were brought near. V. 16, reconciled to God.

V. 18, given access to the Father. V. 19, fellow citizens, members of the household of God. V. 20, on the apostolic foundation, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.

V. 22, built together, dwelling place for God. Paul bows his knees before the Father. Why? To pray for the select people.

For this reason. Because of your standing. And I like this.

I mean, this causes me to think. Do you recognize when Paul speaks to Christians in the New Testament, he is talking about how often he thanks the Lord for them and how unceasingly he prays for them. When Paul found elect people of God, he was constrained.

People who the Father loved, he looks at them. He recognized. They're not like the rest of the world.

They're beloved of God and it struck a chord in his own love. Paul prayed for God's people. You can't get away from that reality.

He prayed. He prayed. Why? These people are adopted by the Father.

Adopted through Jesus Christ. Adopted as sons. They're part of the family.

They're in. These are God's people. He set His love on them.

And for Paul, that was powerful. When he found true Christians, it had a singular effect on the angle of his knees. And you notice that.

I bow my knees. Cause them to bend. Now, here's the thing.

I know this. I have desired since the very beginning of this church that we would have a praying church because I'm absolutely convinced that we need God in praying people. They hold on God and God responds to praying people.

God moves and things happen. Prayer is absolutely essential in the life of the church. And what I find is this, when you find prayers in Scripture, they as much as anything are great lessons in how the church should be praying.

And so I want us to take this for what it is. Paul, he's praying. It's a prayer.

Well, not exactly. He's telling us how he prays. This isn't him actually praying like Jesus in John 17.

This is him telling the Ephesians how he prays. His posture of prayer and what he prays. That's what's happening here.

Paul telling us how. Massively instructive. Why? Because Paul's under inspiration.

You know what the Spirit's doing here? Paul, tell them how you pray. That is helpful. Because you know, we see a lot of people pray.

You come to the prayer meetings, you hear people pray. You get in a small group, you hear people pray. When we don't get in a small group, it's what we all stay together, we pass that microphone around, voices come through the speakers, undoubtedly throughout your lives you hear people pray.

And we can ask the question, are our prayers pleasing to God? Are our prayers biblical? Do our prayers resemble something that would seem to be pleasing to God? Maybe we say, well, if we pray, doesn't that in itself please God? But I'll tell you this, there's a place definitely to learn how to pray. Jesus taught His disciples, pray this way. There's a place for being instructed.

There's a place for learning. And I find this, when you find a prayer that we know to be inspired of the Holy Spirit, under inspiration, the Spirit was moving Paul to tell these Ephesians how he prayed. And it's going to do us well to pay attention to this.

Do people pray according to the Spirit? You know, you can hear somebody pray. Well, is that according to the Spirit? Is that not according to the Spirit? Well, we know this is. If you ever want God just to teach you how to pray, here it is.

We don't have to guess. This is acceptable. And brethren, you'll notice what isn't here.

This jumps out at me. What's not here? Oh, how shallow it is when people just simply pray, Lord, bless this, bless him, bless her, bless that, bless the other thing. Do you notice Paul doesn't even use that word to bless once? Now look, I'm certainly not saying that you can't use that term when you pray, but oh, how often praying for a blessing is just a default word for not knowing what to pray and for shallow prayer.

In fact, if you go through Scripture and you look at the specific prayers that are given in Scripture, how seldom or never do you find that word. Of course, we want God's blessing. But what sort of blessing? Paul is specific.

See him there. See him there on bended knee. What is he going to ask for? What is it? Let's hear him.

Father, can you see him? Bended knee. Where was he? I don't know where he was. He's in some kind of prison.

He was imprisoned. You can imagine him in a prison cell. You can imagine that a lot of his time was spent there.

And what's he praying for? Hear him. Hear him. Hear his words.

Father, please, please. What? Bless them. Bless that.

Bless Thessalonica. Bless Philippi. Bless the Romans.

Bless those at Jerusalem. It's not that. He's very specific.

And he says specifically for these Ephesians, on bowed, bended knee, listen to his voice. He says, Father, please, according to the riches of Your glory. Now, you could stop right there.

He's, Father, not in some meager way. Not in some offhanded way. Not in some barely recognizable way.

Not in some way where we've got to squint real hard to say, did he answer or not? But according to the riches of Your glory. What a powerful plea. What an argument.

Please, Father, please. I'm asking an answer. Not in some barely recognizable way.

Arise. Act consistent with the riches of Your glory. That is a way worth praying.

That's how you want to pray. Lord, please. Look, we're not like the lost people.

We're not like the pagans. You're not like you were when you were lost in a nominal whatever you were. Whether you were a lost Baptist, a lost pagan, a lost nominal Catholic, lost religious, lost unreligious.

The God you called upon and the kind of prayers you had and some little idol or some small figment of your imagination. Listen, that is not the way we've learned our Scriptures. That's not the way we've learned the God of Scripture.

He is not some small little idol, some little statue to be prayed to like that. He's not like those Indian gods that they have to carry around. This God is the living God and He doesn't need to be carried.

And He can part red seas and when you pray to Him, you should pray according to the magnitude of His glory. That's what Paul's doing. Don't pray silly little prayers.

Look, that doesn't mean you can't pray for the smallest things. I remember Mueller, he would say, look, in his day, I guess they were what? The quill pens? He said something about, you know, if a pen needs to have the cartridge replaced or whatever they called it in that day, he said it's worth praying about. Obviously, even praying about small things, we should blanket everything in our lives in prayer.

But I'm just saying this, we have a big God and we should pray as though He is big. He is rich. If you have something worth praying for, if you have something you think God should grant, if there's some great mountain in your way, then if you're going to ask God to do something, ask Him for the best.

Ask Him for the biggest. Ask Him according to the riches. Brethren, I remember this.

I remember there being something in my life that I really desired to see happen. And I saw a TV show where that thing was granted to somebody. I went to the Lord and I said, Lord, they can think that up and

put that on TV and that's not even real.

But they can imagine that. The true God. Lord, You ought to be able to do better than Hollywood can do.

And certainly He can. And certainly, He would have us have that expectation. Ask Him how? Ask Him according to His riches.

You know, we've got a rich God. Do you believe that when you go to pray? According to His riches. Paul isn't messing around.

He goes to Him, Father, I'm asking for something. Lord, according to the riches of Your glory. Riches.

Riches. His glory. Pray.

That's how we should pray. Ask Him. He doesn't say, oh well, you know.

Humility. If we're going to be humble, we should never ask too much. We should never ask anything too big.

Listen, what is humility? What is pride? Pride is when we're stuck on ourselves. Pride is when we see ourselves big. But what's humility all about? Humility is seeing ourselves small and seeing God big.

And if you're going to claim that God is big, then act like it when you pray. You see, seeing Him as big is not pride. And acting as though He's big is not pride.

You see, you insult Him when you have great, small... I shouldn't use the word great, but when it's these small expectations from Him. Look what He does in Scripture. He saved 3,000 people in a day.

You see, whether it's arguing with God concerning Hollywood. Seriously, Lord? Is Hollywood going to create better, fictitious stories? More glorious than what You can do? Are You going to allow that to happen? But the other argument is, Lord, are You simply going to have us live off the history books? The pages of Scripture that talk about the great works of God in the past? Lord, is that it? Should we just content ourselves? Well, 3,000 people got saved in a day back in the book of Acts, but that can't happen anymore. So we're not even going to ask such things.

You know what our sister is asking down in Saltillo? She sent out a WhatsApp message this morning and she's praying that God would save 20 people in Santa Margarita when our brother goes there to preach today. Well, think ye. Impossible? See, have we just grown to expect very little? Have we come to the place, well, God doesn't do that.

God doesn't part the Red Sea anymore. God doesn't do those things. We should have no expectation.

I'll tell you, if you were on bended knee next to Paul and you were listening to him pray and you were in that prison cell with him, you might be surprised at what he prayed. You might be surprised at the vastness, the size of his prayers. Do things according to Your greatness and my weakness.

Do you know we have a giving God? When God talks about supplying all of our need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, have you thought about that? God will supply your needs according to His riches. Do you believe that? Do you know how rich God is? Do you pray like He is? I'm not talking about just selfishly trying to accumulate everything. I'm not talking about fleshy desires and covetousness.

I'm talking about being involved in the Kingdom of Christ and really having a desire for the glory of God and praying in that way. Praying in a way that God is... Listen, if He didn't spare His own Son, how will He not what? With Him or in Him? Isn't He going to give us every good thing? Don't we have promises of a God who's giving every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights? No variableness. No shadow of turning.

Now that's important. He doesn't change. He's giving.

You know, David, we heard about him in the first hour. He could cast himself on God's mercy. Oh, please, don't hand me over to men.

But you hand me over to God because His mercies are great. That's why he was praying for that son so long. He knew God's mercies.

He prayed for that boy because he thought there was a good possibility that God in all of His mercies would answer. Now, God didn't answer. God didn't save that boy.

But you know what? It shows what David thought about his God. He recognized this is a God whose tendencies are mercy. Look, if you come to a God who is infinite, He is almighty, and His very character is just spilling over with mercy, and He's given us examples like this.

Listen, let this resonate. The Spirit of God recorded this. Paul praying the way he prays so that it would be preserved for us so that we could learn from this.

How do you pray? You come to a God like this? Oh, do you not hear Newton? Large petitions with thee bring. Why? Why? Because you're coming to a King. His grace and power are such, you can never ask too much.

That's the kind of God we're coming to. Listen, if you go before King David, we heard about him, or King Solomon and all of his riches and his glory, or you go before Caesar, or you go before Pharaoh, or you go before President Trump, and you ask for a piece of bubblegum, and you know what? We can think, well, that's ridiculous, but that's how a lot of our prayers are. Paul's not messing around.

He's coming before the King of Kings. And he is appealing. That is a way to appeal.

God, please, don't give to me like the false gods give. Don't give to me like the demons give. Don't give to me like the non-gods give.

You remember those prophets of Baal up on Mount Carmel? Slicing and cutting themselves and jumping around, and the prophet says, well, maybe he's going on a trip. Maybe he's relieving himself. Maybe he's this or that.

Listen, when you pray, you don't want it to be like that. We want to pray to this God, and we want response according to the riches, according to those. How rich is God? I mean, if we look and we say, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. If we're looking at this, He says He blesses us. He has given us promise of blessing.

He does things like parts the Red Seas. He wants us recounting His great works. Why? So that our faith would increase, increase, increase.

So that when we come to Him, we would not have little faith, and we would not ask for little things, and we'd not ask for bubble gum. Don't do that. Don't pray that way.

We need to pray big prayers. Jesus said it. If you've got faith, but the size of a mustard seed, what can you not do? That's the issue.

How do we pray? We need to pray. We need to pray big prayers. We need to pray according to God's riches, His riches in glory.

He is a giving God. Don't pray to Him as though He is some little God. And listen, you're praying to Him as though He is a little God.

If you pray to Him and then walk away not expecting a response. Listen, if you come into the prayer meeting and the only reason you pray things is because it was brought up as a prayer request, and you just prayed it because other people were listening, but you have no expectation, then stop. Stop! You're praying to Him like what? That's an insult.

Pray what you believe you need. Pray what you believe is going to be to His glory. Pray what your children need to be saved.

What your relatives need to be saved. What the church needs to not fall away. Pray big.

Don't pray like He's some little incompetent God. Don't pray to Him in a way that's going to insult Him. Now, Jeffrey Thomas was just with us a few weeks back.

And he said that he used to think that the Holy Spirit was the forgotten member of the Trinity. And he said he's not convinced that's the case anymore. He now believes God the Father is.

I think he is exactly right. The forgotten member of the Trinity. I'm saying among the three.

You know, we live in an age when the Holy Spirit is getting a lot of attention. But what's happened to the Father? Some Christian circles, it seems like it starts and ends with Jesus. But you will notice that Paul is bending his knee before the Father.

The Father. What I want you to think about here is the Father for a second. You know, I went through from Ephesians 3.14. I counted how many times the Father was referenced, how many times Jesus was referenced, how many times the Holy Spirit was referenced.

Can you guess? Make a wild guess. If you were to imagine how much each of them proportionately. Do you have any idea? Equal? The Father and the Son are about equal in their references.

The Spirit, much less. Here's the thing, in the first chapter and a half, the references to Jesus Christ are by far references that identify some aspect of the Father. It's not until you get to chapter 2, verse 13 or thereabouts, that Christ's involvement in our redemption is really spelled out for us.

I want you to think about the Father. Just go through. Quick survey.

Ephesians 1. You see, this is very characteristic. 1.1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Well, Christ is in there, but how is He in there? He's in there only by way of identifying the Father.

Paul is an apostle of Christ, but the active member of the Godhead that is making this happen is indeed the will of God. This is the Father. You see, as we move through here, verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There again, you have the Lord Jesus Christ, but why is His name there? His name is there simply to describe, to give identity to who the Father is. But it's the Father who is active. It is the Father who is moving.

It is the Father who is giving. It is the Father who is choosing. It is the Father adopting.

It is the Father predestinating. It is the Father's will. Again and again and again we see this.

Look, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. 4. Even as He chose us, it's the Father.

5. He predestined us. It's the Father. 6. To the praise of His, this is the Father with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.

That's in Christ. But you see this, verse 9, it's the Father making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose. It's the Father's purpose which He set forth in Christ.

If it was Christ there, you don't say which He set forth in Christ, but which He set forth in Himself. But that's not it. It's God.

11. In Him, in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of the Father, Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory. He is the One who gives the Holy Spirit.

He is the One, if you go to verse 15, for this reason, because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom. See, it's the Father who is giving this. It's the Father who opens their eyes, enlightens them, gives them a knowledge of these things.

Verse 20, or the end of 19, according to the working of His great might, that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. It's the Father who raised Christ from the dead. It's the Father who is working His great might in the people of God.

You keep going through here, verse 4 of chapter 2, but God being rich in mercy. There's the Father again, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. God is doing this.

God raises us up. It's God's love. It's God's mercy.

It's God who seats us with Him, so that in the coming ages, verse 7 of chapter 2, He, God the Father, might show immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Verse 10, We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand or He

prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. What I want you to get a feeling for is you do not want to forget Him.

And I think that even in our song selections in this church, I went through our song list today. It is hard to find songs that are about the Father. Very hard.

I mean, in our song list. Why is that? Well, look, there is a reason that we look to the cross. There's a reason we want to preach the cross.

There's a reason that we want to think about the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ. But you know what you don't want to forget? You don't want to forget that Jesus taught us that when we pray, we should pray this way. Our Father who art in heaven.

We should look to God. God the Father is the one before whom Paul is bending his knee. And you remember, it is the riches of His glory.

He is the one that gives these spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He adopted us as sons in Christ Jesus.

It is Him. It is His love. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, He raised us up with Christ.

He seated us with Christ. It is His blessings that are poured out. It is not by our works.

It is the gift of God that we are saved by grace through faith. Remember this. The Father.

The part that He plays in this. It is the Father who so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. We don't want to forget the Father.

It is His plan. It is His purpose. According to His purpose.

How often do you see that in this book? The Father. The Father. Why do I... Listen, do you know, some of you have heard this, every single time that the Lord Jesus Christ addressed God, He called Him Father.

Every single time. Now there were times that He talked to other people about God and He called them God. My Father, My God.

Your Father, Your God. It's probably backwards, but there are times He used that language. But when He addressed His Father in prayer, He called Him Father every single time.

Except. Do you know when the exception was? On the cross. During the hours of darkness, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Quoting right out of Psalm 22.

What's my point? Sometimes I sit in the prayer meetings and I will hear a brother or a sister, usually it's brothers, and they pray and they call Our Father, they call Him God almost exclusively or the majority of the time. And I wonder why? Why? Brethren, you've received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, what? Abba, Father. It's beyond me why Christians want to pray and consistently call God, God.

We have a God who invites us to call Him Father. In fact, He gave us a Spirit that would compel us to pray that way. Don't be cold and distant in addressing Him.

This is great. Listen, you're coming before One who says, I want you to call Me Father. Why? Because I am your Father.

I mean, you think about a little child coming to a father, how much more you're having the father give good things to them that ask. Including the Spirit. We're coming to Him according to the riches of His glory and He's your Father.

Now that is good news. That bodes well for your prayer life. Does it not? What purpose does Paul cry out to the Father? To ask for a better car, a husband and wife, more money? Look, I'm not saying you can't pray for those things, but I would have you notice this, Paul doesn't pray for himself once here.

Not once. None of those things. Take notice.

Notice. Paul is praying, but he's not praying for himself. Brothers and sisters, how desperately, desperately we need men and women in the church like this.

Paul is interceding. Interceding is what you call it when you bow your knees to God for the sake of others and not for yourselves. How we need intercessors in the church.

And I'm concerned. I'm concerned. When I got saved, honestly, I hungered to have time with the Lord.

The first three years of my life, I was able, outside of work and even times at work, during breaks and lunch, I was able to just... I wasn't married. I was able to give my life to communion with the Lord. And I moved down here to Texas, lived with John Seitzman.

Very, very business-oriented family. And things were working at a pace that I just felt like John was very much given to devotions in the morning and before the family got together. And I liked to walk in the evenings and be out in the field and away from the heat.

And John's schedule and mine were a little bit different. I remember just panting after having that time back. And I recognized that I needed to move separate so that I could get back into my own schedule.

And I longed for that. And I guess my sense was that, well, that's how it is with all Christians. We don't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And we want to abide in Christ. And we love walking to Him and meeting with Him. And there's things to confess and there's worship and just getting to meditate before Him and praying and interceding for the sake of others.

I just assumed that. And then I got married and my wife basically lived that way day after day. And I guess my assumption has largely been, well, of course, that's how Christians live.

I am, I don't know, I guess I'm kind of baffled by the frequency at which I hear that people in this church have a real difficult time maintaining just a consistent intimacy with the Lord. And I guess my concern is this, I'm not sure what lies behind this difficulty. Is it immaturity? Is it worldliness? Is it busyness? Is it just that there's no hunger there? I know this, intercessors don't come from marginally spiritual people.

Why? Because interceding requires love and a level of maturity and a lack of selfishness. Selfish people, their prayers are all about themselves. Very little worship.

Very little confession. But a lot of give me, give me, give me, give me. Now I know, I know there are prayer warriors in this church.

I know there are. I know there are some of you, your walk is close to the Lord. I want there to be more.

I want this to characterize the church as a whole. Intercessors, we desperately, desperately need this. And if people can barely manage to find their way into the secret place of prayer each day, I know this, you're not interceding for anybody.

It's not happening. Where do intercessors come from? They come from people that live in the presence of God. You think about it.

Paul, you can imagine the guard walking by. The guard's talking to each other. What's the guy doing in there? Every time we walk by there, he's on his face.

He wasn't idle. He wasn't wasting his time. He wasn't wasting his time in prison.

He was crying. He was bending his knee. He was pleading.

He was crying out for the sake of others. You find in just about every single one of his epistles, he cried out for people. He called upon them.

Where do intercessors come from? People who don't live by bread alone. People who are desperate. People who are abiding in the Lord.

People who are talking to Him and walking with Him. Where does it come from that somebody says, for this reason, I know them to be a Christian. For that reason, I'm on my knees before them.

They're beloved of God. Something is released in my heart. I need to pray for them.

I'm thinking about other people all the time. I'm thinking about their needs. I'm thinking about them glorifying God.

Where do intercessors come from? Intercessors, not marginally spiritual people. You know, if we don't have intercession happening commonplace in your life, I'm not just talking about in the church. If intercession is not happening as a commonplace thing in your life, one of the great manifestations of sacrificial love is missing.

And listen, that's important. Sacrificial love. You think about judgment day.

Jesus talks about what you did for others. I was in prison and you visited me. You know, one of the ways you can visit people in prison is by praying.

The thing is, as long as you have life and breath and you have consciousness, you can pray for people. We need it. We need this desperately.

Where are the men and women? I know we've got some. I know. But oh God, help us to have more men and women who live in the presence of God on bended knee, whose voices are familiar to the Father, whose voices go up in familiarity to the Father on the behalf of others.

I mean, you can imagine God from God's perspective. There's His voice again. Sure enough, He's asking for a job.

He's asking for a wife. He's asking for a raise. He's asking... But those who God hears His voice, Lord, help so-and-so.

Lord, according to the riches of Your glory, please strengthen that brother down there in Mexico. Please, Lord, open that door for that brother that's trying to get from Costa Rica. Lord, how often is the Lord hearing that voice? Lord, I'm not here to pray for my own needs.

You know I have them, but Lord, brother Matt needs Your help today. He needs Your help. Johannes, Lord, remember Johannes.

Those who can't sit comfortably reading the book or fiddling with their phone because they're feeling a burden for Andy and Rebecca You heard that Trevor... Those of you that weren't here on Wednesday, Trevor Johnson wrote, I think, one of the most powerful missionary letters that he's ever written. Men and women not constantly asking for their own needs. The church needs intercessors.

We desperately need them. Why? Because God answers prayer. Listen, I'm telling you this.

I know this for a fact. I'm so convinced. I've seen it over and over and over again.

God answers prayer. And when people are praying for you, things happen in your life that would not happen if they weren't praying for you. Mark it down.

The elders in this church preach or perform or oversee better when people are praying for them than when they're not praying for them. That is a reality. People live more holy lives.

People live closer to God. People are more prayerful. People are more loving and charitable and kind and tender and forgiving when people are praying for one another than when they're not praying for one another.

That is a fact. I'll tell you, I was thinking about our brother coming here on a week from Wednesday and sharing his needs. If I was on a foreign mission field, I would want to visit as many churches as I could and I would tell the people, look, I'm not here for your money.

I'm just appealing. If there is one person or two people or three people in this church that are prayer warriors and you have any burden for India, I plead with you, pray. And if on judgment day it can be found, there were three people in that church over there and there were two people in that church over there and five in that church over there, and they held that rope.

Not because they were sending me all their dollars all the time, but they prayed for me. They prayed for me all the time. Prayer meetings did not go by in that church.

They weren't praying for me. And oftentimes, every single day of the week, they were holding me up. We need this.

When we pray for one another, I'm telling you, we end up doing things that would not happen if people weren't praying for us. This is the reality. Bending our knees to the Father on behalf of others.

We are the priesthood, brethren. Have you never read that? That fire was not to go out on that altar. And if that was the symbol, if that was the hyperbole, if that was the metaphor, we are the true priesthood.

Don't let the fire go out. And I want to end with this. Paul, this is one of the few places in Scripture where we are specifically told.

It's one of the few places in the New Testament where we are specifically told the posture. This is the only place, I believe, that Paul tells us his posture in prayer. And I just want us to think for a moment.

Paul bowed his knee. Have you ever? We used to sing out at community, O come, let us worship and bow down. Anybody remember that one? O come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. Worship. Worship.

Come, let us bow down. You know what I find in Scripture? I actually find that even though Paul doesn't reference this much, but this one time about his posture, I find that posture in prayer is something that is an interesting study. You can go find men who fell on their faces before God.

Do you remember two who often were found falling on their faces? Moses and Aaron. And you know what's interesting about those two guys? They were falling on their faces for others as well, not for their own needs. They weren't just falling on their faces for the needs of others.

They were falling on their faces that God wouldn't destroy others. Repeatedly, they were on their faces. Remember Joshua? He came face to face with the angel of the Lord.

He found himself on his face. Luke's account of the leper that came to Jesus Christ, it said that he fell on his face. Why do people fall on their face? You can't go any lower than that.

I mean, if you were trying to go low before somebody, there's no lower you can get. We're not talking bended knee here. We're talking totally as low as you can go on your face.

Maybe your knees are bent. Maybe you're prostrate. What is that a picture of? Certainly, it's a picture of extreme submission.

It's the lowest. Expressing unworthiness, inadequacy. Do you think about bowing the knee? Come, let us worship and bow down.

Or what does Scripture say? There is a day coming when every knee shall bow. God has given Jesus Christ a name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. That is a picture of submission.

It's a picture of reverence, worship, allegiance, kneeling, bowing. Well, how about lifting up eyes? I was just singing Psalm 5 the other day. That was another one we often used to sing.

O Lord, in the morning, will I direct my prayer unto Thee and the way that KJV has it, and will look up? You know, there's twice when Jesus prays and it said He looked up to heaven. Now you think about it, the tax collector there in Luke 18, when he prayed, he wouldn't dare look up. He looked down.

But Scripture also speaks about Psalm 123, to you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens. What is it about? I just want us to think about our posture. Why? Because I hope you don't run into God's presence just careless and without thought.

We should think. Think. Who are you coming to? We're coming before a King.

No carelessness. What did God say? I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts. My name will be feared among the nations.

I'll tell you this, your posture, we don't want to be legalistic, but you know what posture often does? It's an expression to the attitude of your heart. And people who just flippantly, carelessly run into God's presence, that's not good. Scripture shows men on their face, those bowing, eyes raised up, arms raised.

Have you ever read that in 1 Timothy 2? Men. And you know what? It's interesting. With holy hands.

That's interesting because you find in Isaiah that they lifted their hands, but God said their hands were covered with blood. You say, what does it mean when you raise your hands? It's a picture, holy hands, clean. It's the idea, it seems to have the idea of, there's a clean slate.

I've confessed my sin. I don't know of anything between. I'm walking in this righteousness of Christ and in the power of His resurrection.

As far as I know, I have not grieved. There's nothing outstanding. But I'll tell you this, I mean, there are times I lay in bed and I raise my arms and I'm not thinking about the cleanliness of my hands.

I'm just thinking, I'm thinking when, like if I get done preaching and come down and one of the little children comes up and they're raising their hands, what are you going to do? Are there any of you who just swat those hands away? No, you're going to pick the child up. I mean, if little James Luciano runs up with his arms up, I'm not going to just scowl at him and say, what do you want? You grab the child. You pick him up.

And sometimes the raising of hands is just trying to get as close to Him. Lord, I want more of You. Just touch me.

Pick me up. Or you think about sitting. 2 Samuel 7, after God pronounced all the blessings on David, David went to the house of the Lord and he sat.

And God spoke to him. Jehoshaphat, we find where he stood in the assembly of Judah when he was praying. Standing, that's kind of like if you stand before a dignitary, and that's a posture of boldness.

Sometimes it's more of a cultural thing. In Romania, they stand. Sometimes we stand when the Scriptures are read.

You know, when Kevin's here, he'll have us all stand. Or Cello had us all stand. But you know, in Romania, I think they sit when they read Scripture, but they stand when they pray.

Now they may not know why they do that other than it's just traditional. But I don't want us to do things just because it's traditional, legalistic, or any other thing. But I want us to be thinking.

Don't be careless. You're going before a great King. Think.

Don't just, yes, we're children, and we can go into His presence immediately when we need to. And we can go in as children before a father. But you know, fathers demand reverence.

Be reverent. Be thoughtful. Think about praying.

Think about your prayers. Pray. You know, how many children in the church actually ever stumble upon parents on their knees? How many of you are bending your knees? How many pray on your face? I remember Whitefield.

Whitefield would pray on bended knee and read his Bible, have his Matthew Henry commentary open. I'm not saying you have to do that. But you see, it comes from an attitude of heart.

Pray. Pray. I've been reading.

My wife went through my books when I was in Ecuador, and she took a bunch of them she wants to take to half price. And so I was looking at the two-volume Cotton Mather, Great Works of Christ in America, and I thought, oh, you're taking those? And so I grabbed them out, and I've been reading. And I'm reading through a section right now on the last testimonies of all sorts of people who were being executed.

You know they put people to death for adultery? We were just talking about that at Men's Grace House the other day. They put people to death for adultery in those days. They put people to death for bestiality.

And for murder and for witchcraft. I mean, a woman was consulting with a demon and they executed her. And you know, I was reading about all these different accounts.

And when they would take these people to the gallows, they would give them opportunity to speak. And they had a lot of the last words. And you know what I found again and again and again? People, these people who were moments away from facing God and stepping out into eternity, they said, if only I would have started that day in prayer.

They said, I think God would have kept me from doing what I did. Now look, aside from whether they were lost or saved, that's not really the issue. But it's amazing how often I saw it over and over.

How often they attributed, oh, if only I had sought God that day, I probably would not have slit my wife's throat, which is what one of them did, in a rage. And I just thought about that. We have a God who answers prayer.

And I'm not talking about just starting your day by praying for yourself. Oh, what things might you have avoided during any given day if you would have started your day on your knees before the Lord? But brethren, how many of your brothers and sisters might not have done what they did on any given day if you had started your day by praying for them? I hope there's enough care, enough concern. We need more of the heart of Paul who unceasingly prayed for people.

He didn't see other churches as competitors or something or people not to pray for. We don't want to see them blessed. Everywhere where there was somebody that God had bestowed His love on, His heart, His affection went out there.

He made great sacrifices. That's something, no matter what your gifts are, no matter where you are, no matter what your condition, no matter what your health, no matter what your age, you can pray for others. You can pray.

I mean, provided you have the Holy Spirit, provided you're one of Christ, you have access and you can pray for others who need intercessors. This is my great appeal today. Pray for others.

Pray, pray, pray. Be as Paul was and pray big and pray according to the riches of His glory. Don't pray meager prayers.

Don't pray like He's incompetent God or a small God. We have a great God. You're coming before a great King.

Go before Him in reverence. Go before Him on unbended knees. And lift up others.

Father, I pray that You would do this. I pray, Lord, more, more, more, more intercessors. Give us a church of intercessors.

Lord, those who are already intercessors, I pray for them. Oh, Father, You say when we do things for others, there it is in Isaiah 58, when we call, You'll say, here I am. And I pray for those who are intercessors.

They love others and they pour themselves out. Lord, remember them in all of their needs. Give us a church of intercessors.

Give us that. Lord, I believe You have to a great degree, but more, more, more. Encourage, stir, stoke the fire of prayer, the fire for intimacy, the hunger.

Make Your children hungry for communion with You, hungry for intimacy, hungry to show their love. Lord, give us to love what You love. And we know where You set Your love on certain individuals.

You would have us to love them as You love them. And love for the brethren is so characteristic of what it is to be a child of God. And I pray that that love would permeate the love of intercession.

Lord, forgive us for selfishness, Lord. We know there's too much of it in each one of us. We pray that You'd kill it, kill it, kill it.

We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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