

The Art of Pleading to God

by Tim Conway

The art of pleading with God involves preparing our case and making arguments before Him to persuade Him to answer our prayers.

Duration: 1:00:38

Scripture: Psalm 26:1, Psalm 27:9, Psalm 70:5, Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24, Luke 11:1, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and the art of pleading with God. It delves into the disciples' request to Jesus to teach them to pray, highlighting the need for God's power, presence, and gracious help in our lives. The sermon stresses the essential role of prayer in fulfilling God's calling for us to be like Christ and to do what we cannot do without His aid. It also explores the concept of preparing our case before God, making arguments in prayer, and seeking God's intervention based on His reputation, Word, character, providence, and our relationship as His children.

Transcript

Luke 11 is where I'd like to read to, or read from. We won't spend much time here, but just as a lead-in text, a way to open up this morning. Luke 11, verse 1. Now Jesus was praying in a certain place.

When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples. You never want to miss the first part of that verse. Jesus was praying.

No doubt He prayed often times in the presence and in the sight of His disciples. He prayed, and they saw Him pray. They realized the Lord knew something about prayer.

They said, Lord, teach us. I welcome you all here this morning. I know that we have visitors with us.

If you are visiting, you may not know that we are coming to the end of our church's prayer week. Why do we start each year with a week focused on fasting, focused on prayer? I'll tell you this. I have but one answer for you.

We need God. We need God's power. We need God's presence.

We need God's gracious help. Look, we exist here in this place, this church. We exist here to be and to do what we cannot be and what we cannot do unless God comes to our aid.

It's that basic. We pray as we start the new year simply because we've been called by our God to be, to do. What we need is help to be and to do.

What have we been called to be? Be like Christ. Be lovers of one another fervently. Be in unity.

Be humble. Be pure. Be lowly.

Be holy. We're called to be forgiving and merciful and honest and diligent. And not only are we called to be what we cannot be by ourselves without His help, without His power, without His Holy Spirit's workings in our midst, we're called to do things that we simply can't do because they're humanly impossible unless He comes.

Which one of us has the ability to be a winner of souls unless God regenerates? Which one of us has the ability to plant a church unless God gives the increase? Which one of us can preach to cold, hard sinners' hearts and have them melted in repentance? I don't have that power. Which one of us can preach to God's people to motivate them, to convict them? Which one of us has the ability to give a brother or sister the ability to wash toilets and empty the garbage for Christ and not murmur, not complain, not feel slighted? How do you preach to somebody to get them to where they're... What must I do to be saved? Listen, we send people down the streets, out to the courts. We've got people coming in here.

We try to preach to our children in our houses, in our homes. We're trying to evangelize in our families, in our workplaces, in our schools. Right here from this very pulpit, we seek to be a light, to be a witness.

How can we do this? We pray. Brethren, visitors, folks. We're not here to put on a show every week.

This isn't an act. This isn't somewhere that you come from Sunday entertainment. This is not a social organization.

And God forbid, this is not some place where a bunch of social outcasts who can't find friends somewhere else come because there's some identity here or there's some friendship that they just can't find. There have been places like that. People are social misfits and they come together in this little religious organization.

That's not what this is. We are God's redeemed people. We are God's covenant people.

We are a church of a living Christ brought together to meet in a local body to be salt and light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among which He has placed us. He's called us out of darkness to turn the world upside down against our enemies. We are helpless.

We are weak. We are nothing. If we're ever going to become a formidable moral force to be reckoned with, if we're ever going to be dangerous against the enemies of God, forever going to be something that has a terrible and mysterious aspect about us, if we're ever going to be invincible before our foes, we've got to have God, the living God, His presence, His power, His help.

We feel as the psalmist of old said, O Lord, do not be far off. O You, my help, come quickly to my aid. That's Psalm 22:19.

That's our desire as well. Our desire. My desire.

And so, we pray and we fast. My sermon this morning, look, we're coming out of a week of prayer. It's not like we're all done with prayer now.

It's not like we're not going to have other weeks where we specifically give ourselves. Typically four times a year, we give ourselves to specific seeking of God for the sake of our missionaries. This first week of the year is kind of a general matter.

This sermon this morning is aimed at helping us to know how to pray, how to fast, how to seek, how to knock. How? I've entitled my sermon, The Art of Pleading with God. Now listen.

It was old Spurgeon who said this. You can be omnipotent if you know how to pray. It's been said, prayer moves the arm that moves the world.

And I'm convinced of this. Just because a person is a Christian, that does not automatically guarantee that he or she knows how to pray well or plead well. Yes, when you're saved, God gives you a spirit crying, Abba, Father.

I know that's there. If you're a child of God, you come forth into the kingdom praying. That's the breath of life for the child of God.

But that doesn't mean you know how to plead and pray well. It doesn't mean that. I'm convinced of this because it's apparent to me that Jesus was convinced of this.

Many of you are no doubt familiar with this account from Luke 11. One of His disciples came to Jesus. Now notice that.

It wasn't some lost pagan. It was one of the followers of Christ. It was a Christian that came to Him.

It was one of His disciples. And He said, Lord, teach us to pray. You know what the Lord did not do? The Lord did not immediately say, oh, I don't need to do that.

After all, you're a Christian. Just open your mouth and talk to God any old way you want. It's all the same.

He did not say, it's okay to just casually run into God's presence, no care, no effort, just spit out a flurry of whatever thoughts, having to rush into your head like some herd of pigs in there. He doesn't say that. He doesn't assume.

He doesn't say that little attention, little forethought, little consideration in prayer is acceptable. So you know what He does do? He does proceed to give them instruction on how to pray. Clearly, He does not assume all Christians have the art of pleading with God all figured out simply because they're saved.

So look, I stand here this morning certainly not as one who has this art of pleading with God perfected in my own life, but I stand here this morning as one who realizes there is an art to pleading with God. There is such a thing. There are truths to be realized and to be put into practice that will make your praying more effectual, more successful, more powerful.

Jesus thought so, or He would not have dealt with those Christians the way He did in teaching them how to be successful in prayer. I stand here as well, as one who is keenly aware of something. I know as I read

the history books, and I know in my 19 years as a Christian, as I've watched God's people, there are some, their prayers get answered a whole lot more than others.

I've seen it. Some are more fruitful, more accomplished, and more victorious in prayer. Some seem to have found the key of opening the treasures of God more so than others.

And as I thought back through my life, I'll tell you this, much like some of you heard Matt talk about Charles Leiter, that he did kind of an informal sermon with his church up there in Kurtzville, and that he threw out a whole bunch of different verses from the Bible that have been a real blessing to him. I'll tell you, as I look back across my 19 years as a Christian, and I was thinking, okay, I'm going to talk to these folks about prayer. In my life, what stands out in my life? What verses? And I'll tell you what, there's one verse I come back to over and over and over again because I heard this verse in a sermon.

And it's actually that verse in connection with this sermon that I read as a young Christian, preached by Charles Spurgeon on July 15, 1866. It's entitled, Order and Argument in Prayer. It's an interesting title.

Listen to this. In that sermon, now look, you guys should all turn there because I want you to see this verse. Job, now look, if you don't know where Job is, you just split your Bible right about down the middle, you'll probably hit Psalms, and right before the Psalms is Job.

So you find Job in chapter 23, verses 3 and 4. This is where Spurgeon preached from in that sermon preached back in 1866. Look at what Job says. Oh, that I knew... Everybody have that? Job 23, verse 3. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat.

You know something? Job lost his family. He lost his wealth. But as you read the book of Job, what you'll find he most sorrowed over was he lost sight of the smile of God.

Where might I find Him? He wants to come to His seat. Now look, verse 4. I would lay my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. Now in the King James, it says, order my cause.

Therefore, Spurgeon came up with order and argument. Because in the King James, there's order, there's argument right there in verse 4. In our ESVs, it's lay my case. Same thing.

Order my cause. Lay out my case. Fill my mouth with arguments.

Here's the thing. Spurgeon looked at that verse and he said, you know what? This is what it means to plead with God. And in his thinking, he reasoned that Job here reveals the secrets of the closet and unveils the art of prayer.

Spurgeon says we're shown here the art and mystery of pleading. We have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer. And he believed that if we would pay attention to Job in this, we might by God's help acquire no little skill in interceding with God.

And here's Spurgeon's general observation. He says, you know what? The ancient saints were inclined with Job to order their cause before God. They're like a man coming into the courtroom to make his case.

They just don't run in there all haphazard. Now look, that's not to say that as Christians there aren't times on the moment we've got to go to God now. We don't have time for argument.

We don't have time to arrange. We don't have time to prepare anything. We've got to run in there.

My need is urgent. My need is now. And obviously, that type of praying is suitable and something that we need to pursue.

But just as a man doesn't just run into the courtroom before the judge just spit out anything in his case, so Spurgeon sees here in Job a man entering the courtroom before God with his suit well prepared. Now look, we sang a song today by John Newton. Anybody know what that song was? Somebody's going to say Amazing Grace and of course, you'd be right.

Come, my soul, thy suit prepared. You guys, probably most of you are not familiar with that song. Now Craig brought that up on Wednesday and he actually quoted from the second stanza.

Let me tell you. You just sang it today. Thou art coming to a king.

Large petitions with thee bring for His grace and power are such none can ever ask too much. How many of you knew that song before you came in here today? Wow. I thought that when I thought about singing it.

But listen, the first stanza says this. You guys probably just read it. Because of the old 18th century English, you didn't even realize what in the world was being said.

Listen, here's how the song opens. Come, my soul. So, what you have is Newton basically speaking to himself.

Come, my soul, thy suit prepared. Jesus loves to answer prayer. Now hear what He's saying.

Prepare soul. Me. Prepare your suit.

What does that mean? Get the iron out? Get the wrinkles out? Suit is being used here like lawsuit. That's the idea. It carries the meaning of making your case.

Newton's encouraging himself in this song to go before God with a case well prepared. This is just what Job's getting at. He says, I would lay my case before Him.

How many people play in prayer? Trivial, they have no case, they have no course, they have no arguments, they have no reasons whatsoever to suggest that they ought to have from God what they ask for. Listen, the great champions of prayer have always been those who enter into the presence of the Lord with their case made ready. Newton knew this.

Job knew this. Spurgeon knew this. Years ago, as a new Christian, when I read this, I became persuaded of this.

This has radically and fundamentally helped my prayers. There is an art to pleading with God. And I believe one of the most helpful, fundamentally practical aspects to this art is found right here.

Few things have helped me more in my own prayer life than coming face-to-face with this truth and with this practice. Preparing your case. Making arguments before God as you seek Him for help, provision, blessing.

Now look, some of you might be saying, maybe you don't get this. What in the world are you talking about? Argue with God? That doesn't sound like a good thing. Look, you guys know hundreds of billions of dollars are coming out of taxpayer money right now to do what? Bailout.

You can call it many other names, I'm certain, but that's the politically correct name today. Bailout. It may be in the trillions now.

Okay, let's suppose this. Suppose you are the CEO of a company that wants a big chunk of this money. And so, you know what happens? You have an opportunity before a congressional hearing to sit down and to ask for the money.

And so let's say you're the CEO and you come in and you sit down and you say, Congressman, I want \$8 billion. Would you please give it to me? Period. Thank you.

And you're all done. You get up and you walk out. I'll tell you what your company is going to do.

They're going to fire you as incompetent. Because that is not how you make a case to get the money. You know what you're going to do if you really... But you know what? That's how some people pray.

They're just like that. No planning, no forethought, no prepared case. Just, Lord, I want this thing.

Please give it to me. Period. The CEO did that in Congress.

They're out of there. You know what's going to happen? You'd be expected to go before Congress and give every fathomable excuse, reason, purpose, cause, argument for why your company should have that money. You're going to talk to them, Well, if you give us the money, it's going to help keep people out of the unemployment lines.

It's going to help your coffers to keep being filled by all the taxes that people working for us are going to make. If we go under, here's all the negative things that are going to happen. You'd try to make it personal.

You'd try to work on their affections. You'd try to work on their emotions. Let me tell you about the different little children that would have dinner put on the table.

Let me tell you about the widows who in the retirement plans would still be funded and be taken care of. And you'd work this thing. And you'd try to make this as convincing and as personal and as practical and as emotional.

And you would work this thing and work this thing. Isn't that right? And I'll tell you what, this is what Job wanted to do. He wanted an opportunity to go before the Lord and do just this.

Make his case. Brethren, this is what it is to prepare your case and fill your mouth with arguments before God in prayer. Spurgeon observed this.

Now listen to this carefully. When a man searches for arguments for a thing, it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. I know.

There are times we have prayer meetings. Something may get prayed for. No arguments used.

And you know you don't pray for that thing ever again. You know why? You weren't urgent. You didn't really want that thing.

When there are things we really want, when we attach great importance, when we're really seeking, Christ says you need to ask. And after that, you need to seek. And after that, you need to knock.

It's not just a simple little thing. He's saying there are depths to this thing. Here's what Spurgeon observed.

The best prayers I've ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I've listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to really be needed and that they must have it. For they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason.

And then for a second reason. And a third reason. And then for a fourth.

And a fifth. Until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly. Brethren, how do we argue? How do we argue that? How do we argue in prayer just that way? How do we argue so as to stir up our own hearts? Stir up our assemblies? And most importantly, to stir the living God? As I look at the pages of Scriptures, I find at least ten types of arguments that the saints of old were inclined to set before the Lord.

Now there are more. There aren't just ten. We don't even hardly have space and time for these ten, let alone everything that could be said.

But I do. I want to go through ten. Here we go.

This is going to help you if you'll take these, if you'll really grab hold of them, they will help you in the art of pleading with God. They will help you in your prayer life. Before I give you the first one, look, if you're not praying, these things are useless.

That's a good prerequisite for all this. You've got to be praying. Okay, here it is.

Number one. First way to argue and plead. Lay your case before the Lord in prayer.

It's this. Make appeal to God's reputation. You say, what do you mean by that? Make appeal to God's reputation? It's this way.

It's this kind of argument. Okay, Moses. You guys know this story.

Moses has got a bunch of stiff-necked people with him. Does he not? Well, here you have the account. The people are complaining.

The people are murmuring one too many times. God says, that's it! I've had it! Moses, I'm disinheriting these people. I'm sending a plague among them.

I'm done. You know what had just happened? They just sent the twelve spies into the land, and ten of them came out and said, there's giants in there. It doesn't matter that God said, go in, I'll be with you.

They're saying, there's giants in there. We're like grasshoppers. We're not going back in.

They began to make up a movement to head back into Egypt. And God says to Moses, that's it. Now here's the thing.

Moses is speaking to the Lord. He could have said, like so often we do. You know, have you ever heard people pray, Lord, bless this, bless that, bless the other? What's that? I mean, for one thing, we need to be specific with our prayers, folks.

Moses didn't say, oh Lord, please don't do that. Uncle Bob, Aunt Susie, they're part of those. Lord, would You please bless them? And Moses had family out there among those people.

But you know what? Moses' desire was to get God to spare those people. And you know what he says? He said, Lord, listen to how he argues. He says, Lord, the people in Egypt, the people in these pagan nations, they're watching.

They know You're among these people. They know You've walked in their midst. They know You've led them by this great pillar of smoke and light and fire.

They know that. Lord, if You kill this people, they're not going to look and say, well, obviously those people were wicked and God is holy and He had to off them. He says, no, Lord, that's not what's going to happen.

If You kill these people, Your name is going to get dragged through the mud. They're going to say nothing about the people. They're going to say You brought them out here and You were able to take them into the promised land.

It's going to come back on You. Oh, what a powerful way that is to argue with God in prayer. Lord, I've been there.

I can remember. We talk about persecution. I can remember when I was first saved and people trying to set me up with potential people to marry.

And I can remember telling my stepdad, I am waiting upon the Lord to bring me a wife. I'm going to wait until He brings me. You can take that kind of thing and go before the Lord.

Lord, I have told my family. I have told my friends. I've told the neighbors out here in these neighborhoods that I trust You.

I'm waiting on You. I believe that You are my God and You will take care of me. And Lord, if You don't come through, it's Your name that I've exalted that's going to be dressed.

You know what? Moses got what he was asking for. I've got what I was asking for. Oh, I feel this.

We go out there in these streets. We tell people the God we believe in. And we can pray, Lord, we have bragged on You.

We have boasted in You. We have told people about You. And if You don't come through, if You don't rise up, then Lord, it isn't so much us.

It's You. Oh, that's powerful. Because God is intently interested in His glory.

Oh, His name's sake. How many times does that come forth in Scripture? And then, second, how about this? How about an appeal to God's Word? It's another mighty mover of God pleading His own Word, pleading His own promises. Brethren, do you boldly hold God? Young man, I'm not going to compete with you.

Christian, do you hold God? That's not much better, is it? Do you guys hold God to His Word? I'll tell you what. Jacob. Here's another old saying.

We've got Moses, now we've got Jacob. We're going to look at some of these old... I want you to see how they argued. Jacob.

He's out there. Boy, you know the story. Under the starry sky by the river Jabbok, he's crossing, fording that.

He's got his family with him. Word has been sent to his brother Esau that Jacob is coming. Let me tell you what.

Jacob is coming back to the land of Canaan. You know why? Because God told him to go. God said, return to your land.

Return to your kindred people. Return and I will do you good. So he's going.

Jacob's going. And you know what? Word goes to his brother Esau, who if you remember, the last time he saw Esau, Esau wanted him dead. Esau wanted to kill him.

Word goes to Esau. The servant comes back and says, yeah, we told your brother. First thing he did was jump on his horse with 400 men and they're coming this way real fast.

And Jacob's saying, that doesn't sound good. There he is under those stars. You know what he says? Here's how he pleads.

Lord, You said You would do me good. Oh, how powerful is that! You said. You gave Your Word.

Oh, you know what? Sometimes as a pastor, I look at some situation happening with one of the brethren and there's some kind of sin. I can go before the Lord and I can say, Lord, You promised. You predestinated them to be conformed to the image of Christ.

That's Your Word. That's Your Word. You can go there.

If God has said it, take Him to task. Listen, God gave His Word meaning to keep it. Do we not serve the God who cannot lie? Do we not serve that God that You said? That's powerful, folks.

He promises. He promises. I mean, you think about it.

What promises is He given in the Word? He promises that if you open your mouth wide, He'll do what? Fill it. That's a promise. He promises to not leave us.

What's one of the promises right there in the New Covenant in Jeremiah 32? I will do them good. That was in one of the songs. Did you guys catch that? He promised.

That was in Amazing Grace. He promised to do His people good. I can come to any situation in my Christian life and I can say, Lord, just like Jacob did, You promised me good.

Third, make appeal to God's character. And what I mean by that is His different attributes, His different characteristics. Listen to the Old Testament prophet Daniel.

Oh my God, incline Your ear in here. Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city that is called by Your name. For we do not present our pleas before You because of our righteousness.

No, we're not going to plead our righteousness. Daniel, what are you going to plead? But because of Your great mercy. You know what? You want to learn the art of pleading? I'll tell you this, when you want something, look at all the attributes of God and you look at those attributes that would be most magnified by giving you what you asked for and nail it right there.

And I think about it. Lord, save some of these wicked, wretched prostitutes off these streets. Save them, Lord.

Why? What would be my arguments? Oh, go right to His characteristics. Lord, certainly it would take great pity to save such wretches. Oh, we can understand if we're asking God to save our children.

But Lord, wouldn't that magnify Your pity? Wouldn't that just put You on display? Your pity, Your mercy, Your love if You save some scoundrel out off these streets? Think about that, folks. Think about that. God's reputation, God's Word, God's character.

Hit those things. Oh, number four. I love this one.

Appeal to God as your Father. This was a favorite with our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Father, save me from this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.

Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given me that they may be one even as we are one. Every one of those is a request of the Son to the Father. And He enters in, Father, some of You pray with a tendency to be really impersonal.

You speak to Your heavenly Father in cold terms. God, God, God, God, God. That's not how Christ taught you to pray.

Our Father who art in Heaven, that's how He taught us to pray. Brethren, appeal to God as your Father. Listen to this.

Again, this comes from Spurgeon's autobiography. But listen to this. Spurgeon had various types of diseases.

He would go to Mentone, France to try to recover because the climate was more conducive to that. He says this, When I was wracked some months ago with exceeding pain to an extreme degree so that I could no longer bear it without crying out. Look, this is where he got.

His pain is so bad he's crying out. What he did, he asked all to go from the room. Just please, all go out from me.

Leave me alone. And then I had nothing to say to God but this. Now listen to how he pleads.

Listen to the case he makes. Thou art my Father, and I am Thy child. And Thou as a Father art tender and full of mercy.

I could not bear to see my own child suffer as Thou makest me suffer. And if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do what I could to help him, 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? That's how he prayed.

And you know when the people came back in the room, he said this to them, I shall never have such again from this moment for God has heard my prayer. And this is what he says, I bless God that ease came and the wracking pain never returned. He's your Father, brethren.

He's your Father. That doesn't hold sway in prayer. Fifth, I know we're going to have to accelerate, I understand that, but plead God's providence.

Here's another very powerful, persuasive argument. 2 Chronicles 1.9 Here's Solomon praying this time. Solomon, he says this, O Lord God, let Your Word to David my father be now fulfilled.

You see one argument? He's playing on the Word. Lord, You said. You said.

So we already dealt with that one. We're not going to hit that here. Look, you don't have to just use one argument.

Mix them up. Use as many as possible. That's the way to pray.

That's what Spurgeon was talking about. You lay one reason, and then two, and then three, and four, and five. The whole thing's just awakened in fervency.

Listen to Solomon. Let Your Word to David my father be now fulfilled for or because. Here's another strong reason.

For You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Oh, beloved. Argue God's providence.

Solomon didn't become a king because he wanted to become king. He became a king because God made him a king. And as such, he could say, Lord, You put me in this place.

Oh, I've been there. I've been there this way. Lord, You saved me.

I know I called upon the Lord, but You saved me. You showed me grace. You made me a pastor.

Look, there are some things I have to do as a pastor. I'll be honest, I don't want to do. I don't enjoy doing certain things.

They're hard. You've got to deal with people over hard things. And I ask for grace because Lord, I didn't make myself a pastor of this church.

You did. You put me here. Oh, what a way.

Some of you remember, Matt was trying to hit on a story about George Mueller last week. I want you to hear a more complete version of that because this is where Mueller goes in his arguing with God. Just listen to this.

Charles Inglis, the well-known evangelist, relates the following remarkable incident. So here you have an evangelist relating this story about Mueller. He says, When I first came to America 31 years ago, I crossed the Atlantic with the captain of a steamer who was one of the most devoted men I ever knew.

I think Matt made him out to be a lost man, but actually he wasn't. This evangelist says the captain was one of the most devoted men I ever knew. And when we were off the banks of Newfoundland, they were sailing towards Canada, he said to me, Mr. Inglis, the last time I crossed here five weeks ago, one of the most extraordinary things happened that has completely revolutionized the whole of my Christian life.

He says, We had a man of God on board, George Mueller of Bristol. I'd been on the bridge for 22 hours, never left it. I was startled by someone tapping me on the shoulder.

It was George Mueller. The captain said, I've come to tell you that I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon. Now this was Wednesday.

I said, It's impossible. Very well, Mueller said, If your ship can't take me, God will find some other means of locomotion to take me. I've never broken engagement in 57 years.

The captain replied, I would willingly help you. But how can I? I'm helpless. Mueller said, Let us go down to the chart room and pray.

I looked at this man, and I thought to myself, What lunatic asylum could the man have come from? I never heard of such a thing. Mr. Mueller, I said, Do you know how dense this fog is? No, he replied. My eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life.

He went down on his knees, and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. I thought to myself, that would suit a children's class where the children were not more than 8 or 9 years of age. And the captain goes on to say this.

The burden of his prayer was something like this. Oh Lord, if it is consistent with Thy will, please remove this fog in five minutes. Now here it is.

Here's his argument. Here's what I want you to see. He's pleading providence.

Like Solomon. You made me captain. Or you made me king.

Mueller says, You know the engagement you made for me in Quebec for Saturday. I believe it's Your will. And he's basically saying, Lord, You made this engagement for me.

When I prayed about taking it in the beginning, I prayed to You. I had a peace. This is an engagement You scheduled for me.

You have there. When he finished, the captain says, I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder, and he told me not to pray. First he said, You do not believe God will do it.

And second, I believe He already has done it. And there's no need whatever for you to pray about it. I looked at him, and George Mueller said this, Captain, I have known my Lord for 57 years, and there's never been a single day that I have failed to gain an audience with the King.

Get up, Captain, and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone. I got up, and the fog was gone. On Saturday afternoon, George Mueller was indeed in Quebec, and he met.

What a way to pray. I mean, he says, It's simple. It's suitable for 8 or 9 year olds.

I'm telling you, there's an art of pleading in that that some of the most experienced Christians on the face of this earth have not figured out yet. An art of pleading. Lord, You opened the door for this to happen.

You did this. I mean, what a thing! Lord, did we not pray as a church about starting a church down in Corpus Christi? Did we not? Lord, You opened the door. We prayed, give us such and such amount of people, and we'll start.

You gave us exactly the amount. Lord, did we invent this thing over in Turkey? Did we not ask You for a missionary? You gave us one. Did we not ask that You give that missionary a second man to help him so that they could go forth two by two? You gave him.

Now, are You going to abandon us? Is this not Your work? Oh, plead His providence, brethren. It's powerful. Plead your weakness.

Number 6. Psalm 70. Listen to David. But I am poor and needy.

Hasten to me, O God. You're my help, my deliverer. O Lord, do not delay.

Look, if somebody comes in here, I'll tell you this, people come in out of these neighborhoods, usually east side. They're looking for our financial help. We do help people.

But I'll tell you this, typically the officers here, we meet with them in the back room. Somebody came in here, we went in the back room, and they said, we need help with our electric bill. But then they began to tell us about, you know, how much money they had, how wealthy they were, how much they made.

And they started telling us all about the TVs they had, the toys they had, the swimming pools they had, how their kids were all getting fat, eating Twinkies all the time. They sat in front of their big television and watched all their collection of zillions. They're not going to get our help! Why? Because they don't need it.

Oh, folks, if you need what you need from God, let Him know. Lord, I'm needy. I need your help.

Help me. I'm poor. Hastened.

Lord, I can't do this in myself. I don't have the ability. Lord, if you leave me to myself, of course I'm going to fall on my face.

And then this one. Now look, this doesn't contradict what I just said. Plead your poverty, but at the same time, plead your graces.

Oh, now this one makes us feel more uncomfortable. But listen to this. Listen to David.

Psalm 26 Praying. God, vindicate me, O Lord. Why? Because you're poor and needy? No, now that's a right-weighted... That he could say.

But listen to what he says. For I have walked in my integrity. Whoa.

Now that makes us feel more uncomfortable. But listen to me. Think about the promises of Scripture.

If you pour yourself out for the hungry, pour yourself out for the needy. This is Isaiah 58. What does it say? You've got promises like this.

God will answer when you call. You know what? If you've poured yourself out for the hungry, say so. What does Scripture say? Give, and it will be given to you, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing.

I'll tell you what. If I spend my life giving to the works of God, to the poor, to the needy, to the widow, to the orphan, to the spread of the Gospel, and I get to a place where I'm in need, I can tell God so. You know what Scripture says? Delight yourself in the Lord in what? He'll give you the desires of your heart.

If you know in here you delight in Him, tell Him so. When you come to any of these promises that have conditions, I recognize that to fulfill the condition requires grace from Him. But so be it.

If He's given it and you've fulfilled it, let Him know. I mean, plead your integrity. David did.

Plead your past deliverances and blessings. Listen to this. Psalm 27.

Again, David. Hide not your face from Me. Turn not your servant away in anger.

O you who have been My help, cast Me not off, forsake Me not, O God of My salvation. I mean, you know what that pleading... that pleading goes something like this. Lord, You've been My help in the past.

If You're going to forsake Me, why didn't You do it back then? But because You helped me then, and I know You are a God who does not change, Lord, help me now. Brethren, the past becomes a very powerful convincing argument in the art of pleading. Nine, plead the blessings of others.

Now you say, well, how does that work? You know where I get that from? I'm constantly reminded by this. When you get into Hebrews 13, the writer of Hebrews quotes this. He says, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Do you know where that comes from? That's actually found in Hebrews 13.5. But do you know where it originally comes from? Anybody have any idea? Do you know who it was spoken to? Joshua. It was spoken to Joshua specifically, privately, personally, individually. And isn't it wonderful how the writer of Hebrews comes along, takes a promise, takes words, spoken to one individual man centuries and centuries before, and just throws it out there as a promise for all of God's people.

Isn't that tremendous? Doesn't that give us warrant? You know what? I've just recently been reading the life and times of Cary, Marshman, and Ward. Three that led the modern day missionary movement into India 200 years ago. Now listen, toward the end of Joshua Marshman's life, he was the last one.

Ward died. Cary died. Marshman was the last one.

Towards the end of his life, he said these words, The evil that I feared has not come. And the good expected has exceeded my highest expectation. I read that, and I took that for my own promise.

The things I feared will not come. In the same way the writer of Hebrews gives me liberty to do such. You know why? God promised to do me good just as much as He promised Joshua Marshman.

And I can take that. And I can hope that. There have been some things I feared in my life.

And I read that, and that gave me hope. The things I fear will not come. That's not to say that there might not be hardships.

I mean, I know Job said that the things that he feared did come. But when he got to the end of his life, I believe he could have said just like Marshman. The things I feared never really came.

The good exceeded. Well, number 10. Oh folks, this is not the least important.

Plead much. Plead often the blood of Jesus Christ. Now those Old Testament saints did not know the name Jesus.

They did not know some of the things that we know. They cannot plead some of the ways we can plead. You've got to come to the New Testament for this.

You can't look at Moses. You can't look at David and Daniel and Solomon. This one comes at us more so, I believe, in Hebrews you find this reality.

The fourth chapter. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy. You see, this is prayer.

Come to the throne of grace. Come there that you may find and receive mercy, grace, and help at time of need. Over in Hebrews 10, this is what we have.

Our confidence. You see there in 4.16, we're told boldly with confidence approach. Over in Hebrews 10, we're told this.

We have confidence to enter the holy places. How? By the blood of Jesus Christ. By the blood of Jesus.

Brethren, plead His sufferings. Plead His merit. Plead His death.

Plead His intercession. Plead His blood. Plead His name.

We are allowed to plead with God in the name of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself said, whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

You guys, brethren, brothers, sisters, take these ten principles. There are more. If we had time, we could look at more.

But these are fundamental to pleading with God. Now, look, just in conclusion here, I want to say two things. Why? Is God hard of hearing? Is God like one of those people on the congressional panel that you have to use all your arguments to get to the place where you're convincing? Does Christ not say that your Father knows what you need? Before you ask.

If He knows my need before I ask, what does it matter if I just simply ask and say, Father, can I have it? Versus if I give all these extended arguments and my good and powerful reasons and I plead His Word and plead His reputation, plead the blood of Christ, plead prayer, I plead all these things, why? I'll give you two reasons as we wrap up. One, because God makes Himself out to be a God who reasons with His people. Oh, you go to the book of Isaiah and repeatedly you find God saying, come now, let us reason together.

Three different times just in that book you find God calling upon His people. Come, reason. Bring your strong arguments.

Lay your case before Me. That's the first thing. God invites such a thing.

Now, the second thing. What's the second reason? It's this. Scripture says this.

You will not receive unless you ask in faith. Listen to these. Matthew 21-22 Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive if you have faith.

Mark 11-24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. You remember, they're trying to cast out a demon. Right? His disciples.

Christ comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration. God, some of the disciples with Him. Some of the others, they're out there.

They're trying to cast a demon out of a young man. They couldn't do it. They pull Him aside privately in Matthew's account of that.

And they say, Lord, why couldn't we do that? And He said, because of your unbelief. Oh, you have little faith. That's the problem.

You know what? One of the problems in prayer is we don't often expect what we ask for. We need to have faith. And I'll tell you what, when you start putting together arguments, it's not so much for God's sake, it's for ours.

You start putting together... Isn't that what Spurgeon said? What happened when somebody in the assembly there brought forth one argument, and two, and ten? He says they were just ignited with this fervency. That's what it will do to you. It gives you an expectation.

It stirs your faith. God takes those arguments which are largely based on the Word of God. He takes them.

He puts fire in them. He puts life in them as you come up with your case, as you come up with your pleadings, as you come up with your arguments. What you find happen is your own faith is just emblazoned.

It's stirred to life. You get to where your expectancy, you are not going to let go. You know what? If you travel down in Luke 11 and you look at what it was that Christ really emphasized there that was the key to receiving, He says importunity.

What does that mean? It means persevering. It means you keep at it. It means you're desiring what you need and you keep asking and you keep seeking and you keep knocking.

And when you've got faith, you'll stay at it. And when you have no faith, you'll pray for something one time and you'll be done with it. You'll be out of there.

No good. And how many of those types of prayers get God's answers? They typically don't. And you know it in this place as well.

When somebody starts praying and they start saying, God, we need this for this reason and for this reason and for this reason, all of a sudden you've got a yes and an amen and it just lathers up the whole group and their faith gets encouraged. Their faith gets to where it lays hold on God and it's like Jacob wrestling with that angel. I'm not letting go.

It's how you give me what I'm asking for. That's why we want to pray that way. And that is the art of pleading with God.

You're dismissed.

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