

Discipleship

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] My thanks once again for your very kind welcome. We're setting this year's Latin context of a theme of discipleship.

And I've chosen this word deliberately because it's not the in-word at the present time. The present in-word, as you know, is the word spirituality.

And there's much talk of various kinds of spirituality, eastern, western, and so on. Now, I have some reservations about this word spirituality for several reasons.

The most fundamental is that it is a non-biblical word. And therefore, difficult to subject to New Testament discipline.

Secondly, because it tends to be a word which is monopolized or auto-monopolized by Roman Catholic theology. And thirdly, because it tends, in my view, to overestimate the role of the autonomous human spirit in our religion.

[1 : 22] It conveys the impression that there is a kind of worldwide spirituality, a quest for God which is common to all faiths, and indeed perhaps even to no faith at all.

And for those reasons, I have tended to move away from the idea of spirituality into the more biblical idea of discipleship.

Because we, as Christians, are not engaged with the rest of mankind in some vague and general spiritual quest.

We are, in fact, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our commitment is very specific and very personal to him and to him alone.

We do, of course, have certain values in common with other faiths and even certain doctrines in common with Judaism and Islam.

[2 : 33] Because they both derive, of course, from the Old Testament. But we are distinguished by our sharply focused commitment to and our submission to God's only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, therefore, our overarching concept is not spirituality but discipleship. Now, there are, of course, again, different forms of discipleship within the Christian tradition.

And I want to maybe identify those just for a moment or two. For example, there is much interest nowadays in what is known as Celtic spirituality.

Going back to St. Columba and the old Celtic church. And also, unfortunately, identified largely with Carmichael's *Carmena Gadelica*, which some of you are Gaelic scholars will know as a collection of Gaelic hymns and prayers, more or less Christian.

The old Celtic spirituality of the St. Columba type had many peculiarities and some very great virtues.

[4 : 11] It was monastic. It was very highly disciplined in terms of personal lifestyle. It was sharply focused on prayer.

It was sharply focused also on missionary activity. And on giving refuge to human beings in all sorts of trouble.

It was also marked by a very clear emphasis on the unity between manual labour and religious devotion and discipleship.

And it would be interesting, particularly in this island, with her Gaelic background, for some of her young folk could commit themselves in the longer term to examining this discipleship in its Columban origins and in its impact upon Highland and Gaelic discipleship in subsequent generations.

To what extent can we still claim to be heirs of St. Columba? And then there is secondly what I simply call Catholic discipleship of the Roman model.

[5 : 40] This is highly sacramental. It argues that it is by the sacraments that grace is conferred initially and also by them that grace is sustained and nourished and by them that grace is restored when lost.

And in many ways the key element in this discipleship is the sacrament of penance in which a Christian, conscious of his own imperfection, comes confessing his or her sin with contrition and also offers satisfaction to God in one way or another.

And this is where, of course, the whole idea of human merit comes in. There are, of course, many Catholics who, despite their church's teaching, live lives of real closeness to God and show a real concern to live real discipleship.

But this mechanical view of the sacraments is, in my view at least, very far from the New Testament pattern. And then thirdly, there is very prominent today Pentecostal or charismatic discipleship. This is one which lays great emphasis on what is called spirit baptism as an experience subsequent to conversion and distinct from conversion and one that's marked, too, by great emphasis on the so-called spiritual gifts, especially on tongue speaking as the authentication and attestation of spirit baptism.

[7 : 48] And, of course, it's also marked by apparent great immediacy and spontaneity of access to God and of communion with God.

Now, I make the point or concession again that this discipleship is one which is pursued by many who are, I am sure, among God's chosen people.

Nevertheless, there is a very curious and striking connection between this discipleship and a fairly modern philosophy of existentialism, which, my own judgment, provides our churches often unsuspectably at many points, because the key fact or claim in that philosophy was that each of us must express ourselves and we must dare to be ourselves.

And that's why in charismatic discipleship and in all its derivatives, especially in modern evangelical worship, there is little emphasis on reverent listening to God and great emphasis on self-expression and self-fulfillment before God.

And so there are those various patterns. There is Celtic discipleship, there is Catholic discipleship, and there is also Pentecostal discipleship.

[9 : 32] And then, fourthly, there is what I would broadly call Reformed or Protestant discipleship. And that discipleship, in brief summary, just again to identify its main contours, is marked by two things.

First of all, by a very clear emphasis on a conversion experience. Indeed, an emphasis often that only by narrating that experience can we come into membership of God's church at all.

The Reformed churches, of all, stragglously insisted that only in union with Christ is their salvation, and only through conversion is their union with Christ.

And so there is a great concern to bring about this conversion experience. And that's why, even within the visible church itself, we do engage so much, or at least did engage so much, in evangelistic preaching to bring to conversion, those born within our own church communities.

And then, secondly, there is, within the Reformed discipleship, a great emphasis on the means of grace, the cultivation of the spiritual life and of discipleship by means of God's stated ordinances for that purpose.

[11 : 16] And it was the presupposition here that growth and grace didn't simply happen, but we had to work at it. And we worked at it in terms of utilising the means of grace.

Those were specified as being three, the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer. Now, we could, in fact, argue that the most obvious and distinguishing element in Reformed worship is the prominence given to the word in the worship of the Reformed churches.

Because our liturgy was not a liturgy of self-expression, but a liturgy of ritual. It was very much a liturgy of listening.

And that's why, at the heart of all Reformed worship, there was the pulpit and the Word of God. And then the sacraments, they too were seen as means of grace.

I worry sometimes that we have moved the focus in this respect and turned them into badges of Christian profession.

[12 : 42] And even turned them sometimes into ordeals, especially for first communicants. But in the mission of John Calvin of Geneva and Robert Bruce of Edinburgh, the sacraments were intended by God to feed our souls.

The Lord's Supper, after all, was a supper. And its great business was to convey to us Christ and the benefits of his redemption.

And then my topic for tonight, which is prayer, which was set again by the Reformed churches firmly in the context of the means of grace.

Christians lived in relationship with God, and they expressed that relationship by means of prayer. Now, having begun a great way out, I want now to homin more narrowly on the advertised topic, which is prayer itself.

I want, first of all, to ask, well, what is prayer and what are its essential elements? And I think that the finest answer to that is given to us in Paul's letter to the Philippians and in chapter 4.

[14 : 17] Now, curiously, in this passage, which I have in mind, prayer is not Paul's immediate concern. Its immediate concern is anxiety.

And he says, be careful for nothing. He's concerned when we often become so worried. And he said, don't be careful or full of anxiety.

But he says, in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And in that exhortation, there are four words, which I think taken together give us a very clear idea as to what prayer actually is.

That is, first of all, the word prayer itself. The word is *prosyche*, and it means really, very specifically, the act of bringing something of bringing something before God.

[15 : 27] This word is never used of address to any human being, or to any creature, or to any earthly potentate.

It is used exclusively of address to God himself. And prayer has that unique characteristic.

It is the soul speaking to God. Or if you go back into the Old Testament story of King Hezekiah, that great moment of crisis when Sinacharib's armies encompassed Jerusalem, he spread the matter before the Lord.

And that dramatizes the meaning of this very special word for prayer. Prayer means bringing something to God and spreading the matter before the Lord.

And that means at one level seeing the matter in the light of God himself. Problems that sometimes look so terrifying in themselves and in the light of our human resources.

[16 : 47] They look so different when they're spread before the Lord. They look so huge and so unmanageable that when they're spread before God then somehow they shriek.

and that's what we do in prayer. We bring them to God and we spread them before God and we see how they look when spread out in the presence of God.

We have another dynamic we're putting that in the terms casting our burdens upon the Lord. Don't carry your own cares, Paul is saying, all those things that weigh you down.

But take them to God and cast all your cares upon him because he cares for you. And so you don't simply bring those things to your friends or to the church or to the priest and you don't keep them bottled up in your own heart.

but you go and talk to someone about them and the one you talk to is God himself and you're spreading before him and in fact you know the old age that a burden shared is a burden halved.

[18 : 14] Maybe indeed it's even more than that in this case because we're making it the Lord's own burden. We're casting it on him and we're saying to him you carry it and you sort it out.

You are the only one who has the answers in this particular situation. And so this whole idea of prayer means the specific and unique activity of speaking not to a human being but speaking to the living God himself and spreading our affairs before him.

And the second word is the word supplication. And this word is interesting because it so stresses the emotional aspect of prayer the importunity the earnestness of desire arising from our own sense of the urgency of our own need.

And so our heart is in it and our passion is in it. You remember when Paul had his thorn in the flesh. He doesn't simply tell us that he besought the Lord but he tells us I besought the Lord thrice.

In terms of the previous word prayer he went to the Lord with this problem. In terms of this word supplication he went to the Lord three times because he was desperate because the thing was getting him down because he simply had to have answers.

[20 : 13] And so he went not once or twice but thrice to God. And you find this also in the story of Jesus in Gethsemane where in his earnest supplication he throws himself on the ground and where

again in his supplication he goes back and goes back again and prays the same prayer.

And remember how it climaxes in that intense agony of earnestness so that there is that great sweating of blood because again the need is so great and the urgency is so pressing and the passion is so strong so that prayer is not some calm and cool and formal detached talking to God it is the outpouring of a soul in agony of a soul that needs and a soul that wants let the heart pants for the water so our soul pants for God Lord be my God I rarely seek my soul to thirst for thee that passionate earnest longing is there always as part of what is meant by a biblical prayer in fact there is something quite remarkable about this word and its other connections the verb form of this word is used by

Saint Paul in that great fifth chapter of 2nd Corinthians where Paul is describing the gospel ambassador and this is how Paul puts it we pray you in Christ's end as though God were beseeching you by us we pray you to be reconciled to God in other words he's saying to us that he as evangelizes is not indifferent to the outcome he is a supplicant at the door of the human heart an ambassador sent by almighty God to plead and to exhort and to entreat and to beg with heart to surrender to

Jesus Christ and you know all the passionate Paul or a Spurgeon or a Whitefield or a John McDonald that are put into that great undertaking it's that very same word that same idea that Paul in Philippians 4 addresses or uses to define prayer the believer praying is like an evangelist evangelizing with a passion for souls with a passion for lost souls begging pleading beseeching and treating and as we pray Paul says that is our posture that's the activity in which we are engaged it's not simply a chat it's not simply a shopping list it is the involvement of the heart with

God because what it wants really matters and then thirdly there is the word thanksgiving prayer and supplication with thanksgiving always this sense of eucharist this sense of past mercies as if prayer begins with the deliberate recollection of all the great things that God has done in the past and those unforgotten deliverances those remembered answers and blessings that God showered upon us and so the soul begins by saying Lord thanks for this and thanks for that and all those many times that I've known your grace and help and deliverance and there's also this that you know very often real prayer is the consequence of our own stress our own trauma we come at moments of extremity we may think of course that well we pray always to pray without ceasing but all of you know that the moments are real prayer have been the moments of desperation in the fearful pit and the miry clay the heart cries from the depths and the soul turns to

[26 : 01] God in that darkness where there is no light and Paul is saying even then you begin with thanksgiving thanksgiving for the past and thanksgiving also for those residual elements of love and mercy that are ours in the darkest situations and that's one of the most important lessons of spiritual life remember how in Ephesians 5 Paul tells us to give thanks always and in all things it's a great challenge in the most desperate situations to remember that thanksgiving is an essential element in prayer that no matter the background to our approach to God the background to our supplication always there is to be thanksgiving it may even be tonight itself as we gather here that someone or other is saying well what am

I to be thankful for but I am sure that at least for those who are Christ's there is no situation without its light I have never known the bad experiences that the prophet speaks of when I say 50 hers among you that feareth the Lord and walk the darkness and hath no light it may be that others have known it but the light of the gospel the light of Christ I think that almost always and not quite always there surely is some light that is the light of the love of God the love that never lets go although it is just possible although

I cannot follow this that an old sense of that love is obscured but the love itself is there and nevertheless we may be too blind to see but the love and the light are still there and so always in our prayer always always the thanksgiving and so there is the word prayer that means speaking directly to God there is the word supplication that speaks of the agony of earnestness with which the soul prays there is the thanksgiving there is an indispensable element of our talking with God and then fourthly request let your requests be made known to

God now this is again very specific it's reminding us that prayer is not vague and general prayer is making specific requests to God prayer prayer is not simply a meditation or a theological soliloquy or a sermon in disguise telling God things he already knows about himself or news for God about the church and the way the church is prayer but prayer is presenting our requests to God now the moment I say requests the moment I use the word specific you will be thinking that I'm going to

suggest that we come to God perhaps with some very specific and detailed lists of our own wants like a child going to

Santa Claus at Christmas and saying here is my list now I don't want at all to identify this Pauline word requests the things we ask for I don't want to equate that with our very human and sometimes very selfish shopping list when we want to go to God and we want this that and the other for our own sake and our own convenience but nevertheless prayer is request it is going to God with something we need and with something we want and with something that really really matters to us it is to that extent specific it is petitionary asking things for ourselves or it is intercessory asking things for others and these aren't small things because we're coming in the name of

[31 : 59] Jesus and on the basis of what he has done and we're asking God for things as great as Christ himself deserves with what Jesus himself deserves but that leads me on to my second main question and it is this if prayer at last means going to God without requests then how do we know what things we should be requesting what rules have to guide us as to what we should be asking

God for now here again I want to pause for a moment not to engage in polemics or criticism of other Christians but to express a personal concern shared I'm sure by many others that there is a real tendency today for people to believe that God will give me anything I ask and so when you think what do I want and you go and ask and if you ask then God will give it to you and then when you don't get it these same theologians tell you ah but it's because you didn't believe you would get it you had no faith you had no faith in your own prayer you didn't really believe that God would give it to you and because you didn't really believe it therefore

God didn't give it to you and it's because of your own faith your lack of faith he would have given it to you if you had really believed that he was going to give it to you and so we have this very simple view of prayer that prayer means that God will give you anything you ask provided you believe that you are going to get it now I believe that that is totally without biblical foundation and I believe that many of us here tonight are very very glad that that is not the way that God actually operates and that God has nowhere promised to give us everything that we want or everything we ask for even if we do believe that we are going to get it it is a very similar approach to one that prevails with regard to the second coming of

Christ there have always been believers in this world whose faith has been that the Lord is going to return in their own lifetime and they have thought it absolutely essential to discipleship to believe that he will come back before they die and they built their whole Christian lives on this erroneous position and they died without seeing the fulfillment of what lay at the very core of their own faith now I believe that the idea that God will give us whatever we ask if we want it enough and believe it enough I believe that that idea is profoundly flawed I think the real position is this that God has made certain promises and

God will give us everything that God has promised and I believe that before we go on our knees we should have we must have a very very clear idea of the promises of God now there are of course two kinds of promises there are those which are conditional and those which are unconditional God will give us health and daily bread and so on subject to certain conditions but other things God has promised to give us unconditionally and I believe that those things which are promised to us unconditionally should be the main content of the prayers of

[37 : 31] God's people there are things like health and prosperity and fitness and the opening of certain doors the passing of examinations etc I don't say that God hasn't said there's no room for these in prayer but I am saying that we can only say there if it be your will if it's for your glory in actual fact I believe that most of us who have thought deeply about those issues do not in our prayers major on that kind of thing because we do not think it appropriate first of all to hold a pistol to God's head nor do believe that we know well enough what's best for us to dictate to

God what portion we should have of health and wealth or whatever else goes into earthly prosperity I would suggest to you that most of us who want to live in submission to God's world are happy to a large extent to leave these things to God himself and that we will allow that he's the best judge give us said the proverb neither wealth nor poverty give me food convenient for me but what then of those absolute promises those unconditional promises the things we have the right to go to God for and expect without any hesitation that God will give us an answer let me just suggest two or three principles in this area first of all that

God's grace will be sufficient for us that's what God said to the apostle Paul Paul said to Lord I can't serve you with these thorns in my flesh I would be far more effective and far more useful and there

would be far more conversions and your church would grow far more rapidly if I didn't have these thorns in the flesh and so not once or twice but thrice Paul went and said to God Lord you know this weakness I have this disability I have this problem I have take it away and I'm asking Lord for your glory I'm sure that Paul prayed meekly and submissively but God gave him a very different answer God said to my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made perfect in weakness

I am not sure that we ever have the right to demand that God would change our circumstances or that God would resolve problems to our own personal satisfaction because I don't think that God has promised anywhere to do that he has not promised us that we shall not suffer bereavement that we shall not be humiliated that we shall not lose certain struggles that our health will not break that certain ventures will fail God hasn't promised us any of these things but he has promised my grace is sufficient and I think that's magnificent you see because it's saying to us that no matter if things turns out there is nothing we can't cope with in some ways it sounds sort of arrogant there is nothing I can't cope with but if

God's grace is sufficient then we're going to cope it may be that you desperately want tonight something to work out in a certain way and I hope it will and more more more more more than that is this but however it falls out by God's grace you're going to cope you're going to be more than a conqueror you're going to mount up with wings like an eagle rather not weary walk and not faint and so it was Paul himself he found that while it was through the envy the outer man was perishing and he was getting weaker and weaker by the day yet the inward man was being renewed day by day what you and I need in life is not providences of our own choosing or circumstances to our own pleasure or resolutions that will suit our own feelings but we need the grace to cope the grace to carry the burdens and to overcome the difficulties and to endure the pain

[43 : 21] God is saying to us there will be no burdens or only easy ones or only tailored ones and made to measure ones God is there no obstacles no temptations nor is there be no pain or that you won't feel it but God is saying that you will cope God is saying that in the worst imaginable scenario that then you can be more than conqueror in the one who loves you and the second great promise is this God is saying to us that he will work all things together for the good of those who love him and so Paul puts it in Romans 8 28 we know that all things work together for good for those who love him and as I think it is best put we know that in all things

God works together for good in respect of those who love him you might say to God Lord we don't want this disaster we don't want things to work out in this particular way that will be a calamity an unmitigated calamity and a total disaster from which we could never recover you know I don't think again we very right we should come back you know we should learn to come back to the cross itself it's an amazing thing you know that Christ and gethsemy prayed that the cup should pass because the experience was so awful and sometimes although there's no cross for you and me nevertheless some things will work out sometimes in nightmarish terms and you suddenly find yourself under universes falling all around you and your whole world is in circumstances and in smithereens others but you got to remember just then that

God is working all things together for good he's never promised us that it wouldn't be disasters but he has promised us that they will not prevent the final perfection of the jigsaw or the final glory of the tapestry they will not come between him and his own invincible determination to conform you to the image of the son I wish I had learned sooner the great principle that from wherever I stand there is a road to the glory of God the Lord to Christ starts at our feet sometimes we think there's no way back there's no road to recovery we'll never get over this things

I'm sure some of you in this audience tonight have moments of that kind nothing more to live for your whole world in ruins and you could speak of it more eloquently than I ever could maybe for some tonight itself is such a moment and I just want to say to you where do you go from here where do you start where on earth do I start where in God's name do I start start at your feet start right where you are because from there

God can work it all together for good that's what is promised and that's what we pray Lord give us grace to cope whatever transpires and God fulfill your promise that you will work all things without exception you will work them all together for the good of those who love you something bitter and something dark that arrives tonight God can subsume it into his own great purpose that black patch that moment of chaos and ugliness which standing by itself in isolation would be so horrid and so meaningless that he can bring it into the picture and in that picture it's absolutely perfect and it's not going to mar the outcome in the least he will work all things together together before good that's an

unconditional promise and there are many others

[49 : 32] God's unconditional promise to make his people holy McChain prayed make me as holy as it's possible for an imperfect sinner to be God will make us holy and God will keep us by his own power through faith unto salvation God has promised all of these things and we ask for them we ask for them more than we ask for good health more than we ask for success more than we ask for reputations and our comfort we ask Lord give me grace to come Lord work it all out for your glory and my good Lord make me as holy as a sinner can be Lord keep me these things we ask unconditionally and I remind you also of the great model prayer that Jesus gave us the so called

Lord's Prayer and if I go back to my access into this part of my talk make your requests known unto God how do I know what to request well Jesus has told us he has given us six great principles of the Lord's Prayer and he's taught us how to pray after this manner therefore pray you this is how you ought to pray and he has shown us in those six petitions how we ought to pray now I'm not going to those petitions in detail far less in depth but there is a magnificence in the order of the prayer because you see the prayer is concerned first of all with God and his glory and his kingdom and only afterwards is it concerned with you and your needs and I tell you again that before we begin to ask

God about our health and our jobs and our exams we ask God about the forgiveness of sins and daily bread and being kept from temptation but before we ask even about any of these things before we ask for forgiveness it's more important than forgiveness more important than anything at all personal as these great concerns with God himself hallowed be your name thy kingdom come you will be done what does a Christian pray for what are his prayers full of what is his great priority when he comes and spreads things before the Lord when he comes and pours his heart out in passionate entreaty before God asking for things that really matter when he makes his request to God what is he focusing upon hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven we pray about the name of God and the kingdom of God and the will of God that is what

Jesus said to us these are the great priorities that the name of God would be revealed all over the world throughout space and through a time that in heaven and earth and hell men and women and angels and demons would reveal the name of God that is the most important thing to a Christian and then the coming of God's kingdom the extension of God's reign the conquering of evil the conquering of the enemies of Christ the extension of the benignity and love and benevolence of the risen savior into every area of human society we want Lord your kingdom your grace your love your truth your holiness to reign everywhere we want this land of Scotland to be conquered for Christ that's what matters and we want a world in which your will is done in which your commandments are obeyed in which people love you with all their hearts and love their neighbours as themselves a world in which men obey your commandment and this is his commandment that they believe in him whom he has said believe in Jesus

Christ that's what we want I'm saying that is it really a problem to know what to pray for is it a problem that we don't know or that we wish it were something different I've been thinking all night in the back of the mind of the wee boy who started an exam in geography in school and had made a blunder in the exam and he prayed to God and he said please make Sydney the capital of Australia and sometimes that's what we're doing we're wanting things upon which our own short term interest appears to depend and we're forgetting the great things the name of God and the kingdom of God and the will of God and then we pray for ourselves and our own needs and what are our needs and it's a very interesting thing you see that in those three great petitions there is no specific reference to my health or my reputation or my prosperity but it starts with what do I need most

[56 : 23] I need forgiveness that's what I need most that's what's uppermost in my mind you have it in Hebrews 4 as well for become boldness to the throne of grace why to obtain mercy propitiation God being at peace with us what do we need most every time we come every day father it's me back again for more forgiveness more forgiveness and it's more forgiveness all the time that's why we're back that's my own primary and most clamant need as far as Jesus guidance goes pray to Abba and when you pray the first thing you say for yourself is Abba I need forgiveness again and then I need daily bread and it is put in a very controlled way because it's bread it's the stuff of life and it's daily and it may mean just give me today enough for today or possibly give me today bread for tomorrow and in some ways that is a great challenge to our whole financial culture of the present time because we want long term security and I'm not going to criticize from this platform with a very

careful thought the use of foresight in respect of our own long term future but I'm saying simply that it does not look at first sight as if that's the perspective of the Lord's prayer where the unconditional promises that

God will give me the bread I need for the doing of God's will and for my work in his kingdom and will give me just enough peace of mind so that today I don't need to worry about tomorrow and I'm frightened I'm really just going to say that the rest is for faith the bread of the day after tomorrow is a matter of faith and I'm not sure that whatever our financial safeguards we can really escape from that and then lead us not into testing but deliver us from evil or deliver us from the evil one the prayer that will be not tested with a testing for which there is no deliverance a testing that is beyond our endurance or beyond our capacity we're saying to

God Lord you know that there is a roaring lion out there and you know all about the wiles of the devil and you know all about his great allies the world and the flesh and will you therefore Lord deliver me from the world and the flesh and the devil and don't let me be tested above what I am able to endure now it seems to me that there are other areas where I think we have to use what our confession of faith calls in a different connection a Christian prudence and the light of nature working out for ourselves what we might want for members of our own family what we might want for ourselves might want for the church of God for our own congregation for this island for this town in which we meet but always saying

Lord this is how I in my limited way see it this is what I would want and this is what I would not want there is a place for that but I'm sure that the main concern of prayer is with the great categorical promises of God and it is upon these that we ought to be focusing as I close I just want to pick one or two very brief remarks I think maybe I'll just remember to two of those I want first of all to express an anxiety that there is developing in the churches today a theology of prayer that is turning prayer itself into a work and giving prayer a freestanding status that in itself does things let me take the risk of being provocative just for a moment and just for a change there is a statement that we often hear more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of

I'm strongly inclined to think that that is profoundly heretical and that prayer does nothing and this it would be the same as saying that more things are wrought by faith than this world dreams of what did be the woman of great faith say when somebody said to her oh you are be the woman of great faith oh no she said not the woman of great faith but the woman of little faith and a great God the truth is not you see that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of but that more things are wrought by God than this world dreams of it's not prayer it's not faith how is your prayer life

[63 : 16] I spoke at the outset of spirituality as a non-biblical word it's your prayer life can you find that in a concordance my concern you see is that we are moving away to a point where too much is being made to depend on the quality of our own praying as if it were the quality the earnestness the frequency of our own prayer as if that were the important thing what did Jesus say about vain repetitions what is the great force in prayer what is the great argument in prayer well I would suggest and it's only that for the moment that the great strength and argument what is invincible in prayer is the name you plead we come in the name of

Jesus and I tell you that so far as I can see if God won't listen to you because of the name you plead he's not going to listen because of the number of lines in your prayer or because of its poetry or because of its earnestness the strength of prayer is the cross of Calvary I think we have to find deliverance from a guilt that modern preachers are often inflicting upon the church guilt about what they call our prayer life there are waves of prayer and all kinds of things that are supposed to change the world what I'm concerned about is look what's happened to the old reformed protestant doctrine of grace it's

God who does these things it's it's not our prayer that changes things but we go to God and we say Lord will you change things the church fought a battle years ago with regard to justification to rid itself of the belief that we were justified on the ground of faith on account of faith and we said the church said no Rabbi Duncan said was faith crucified for you it's Christ who was crucified we're justified on the ground of Christ on account of Christ that's why we're justified and I'm saying was prayer crucified for you our praying needs forgiveness it is Christ's name and God's promises that's what matters and my final comment it's a very brief one it's just to recall a famous word spoken by Abraham Lincoln he said once I go on my knees a thousand times a day because there is no other place to go there is a spontaneity in it a naturalness because when it hurts and when it presses

there is no other place to go well I'll leave it there in the meantime thank you close now by singing the last three stanzas of psalm 72 and after we sing those stanzas if you just give Donald a couple of minutes to get to the door he always likes to meet you all on the way out and after we finish singing the psalm before he does so he goes to the door we pronounce the benediction so we'll sing the last three stanzas of psalm 72 his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall it call ■■■■■ in the must
Son, it shall Men shall be Blessed in the rest All nations shall In the rest Now blessed In the Lord Our God The God of Israel For He alone The worthless Words In glory Of them And blessed [69 : 39] Be His glorious name To all eternity The All And Today Glory■■■ Ames Glory In Let us pray May the blessing of God Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit one God eternal rest upon each one of us now and everlastingly Amen