

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: October 26, 2012

Gracious Heavenly Father, we come to you with great expectation as we do every Friday, that you'd be pleased to usher us into your presence again. You've been with us every moment of our lives. We just pray now that we would have a special unction of the Holy Spirit would be our teacher, you will guide us into all truth, you will lead us to a greater understanding of the person and work of Christ. Father, would you open your Word to us that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Continuing our study on the Sermon on the Mount, looking at Matthew 6, the Disciple's Prayer, commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer. As we've been learning so far, brothers, this is not a prayer that is to be repeated thoughtlessly or just repetitiously, but it really is teaching us a pattern of prayer. It's more of a model of a prayer, how we should pray. Not only the matters we should pray about, the method of our prayer, the means of our prayer, but it's not necessarily something that's just repetitiously, thoughtlessly repeated.

There's nothing wrong with certainly doing that, but you have to have the right attitude. We need to have a certain spirit about our prayer. Let me walk you through this. Just open your Bibles please to Matthew 6 and looking at verse 9. Just let your eyes walk down through the words of the Disciple's Prayer. I want to give you just a quick overview of the spirit behind this prayer, because every one of those words has a spirit behind it that is very, very pertinent for us to understand about our prayer life.

First of all, the word "our." It reveals an unselfish spirit. The word "Father" teaches us about a family spirit. "Hallowed be thy name." It's a reverent spirit. "Thy kingdom come" signifies a loyal spirit. "Thy will be done" a submissive spirit. "Give us this day our daily bread," a dependent spirit. "Forgive us our debts," a penitent spirit. "Lead us not into temptation," a confident spirit. "Thine is the kingdom," a humble spirit. "The power," a triumphant spirit. "The glory," an exultant spirit.

You look behind each one of those phrases, brothers, there's a tremendous reference for us about the spirit of our prayer. Let me just give you these words again, because this is really the model of the Lord's Prayer, the Disciple's Prayer, is to have us be in the right spirit when we come to the Father, understanding our unique relationship with him. It's an unselfish spirit, a family spirit, a reverent spirit, a loyal spirit, a submissive spirit, a dependent spirit, a penitent spirit, a confident spirit, a humble spirit, a triumphant spirit and an exultant spirit.

With that in mind, let's continue our examination of the various items of the Lord's Prayer. Tom, do you want to introduce our guests for us? We just had two of my dearest friends come in.

Tom: *This is my good friend, Pastor James Matthews, and his brother, Ron.*

You guys stand up. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] Good to see you.

Tom: *From New Testament Missionary Baptist Church in Wilkinsburg, and they have some great plans for the community and we've been working with them. It's good to have them here.*

These are two dear brothers. I've have the opportunity to preach in their church about two or three times a year over in Wilkinsburg. It's just a wonderful, wonderful experience, and I'm sure glad that, Ron, you and Jim could be here today. Thank you for coming. Thank you.

Today we want to look at the petition in the prayer that deals with "Give us this day our daily bread."

Last week, we looked at the third petition, which was the accomplishment of the Father's will, "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We began to realize that the significance is, we're committing ourselves to learning all we can about God's will in our lives, and this means consistent and humble study of the Scripture. If we're really going to understand what it is God wants us to do and how we can be aggressive responders to what the Lord is doing in our life, then we really have to have a very humble spirit of recognizing that God's revealed will comes to us through the Scripture. There's a lot of secret things that we do not know, that we'll just work out in God's sovereignty and God's ordaining authority, but the revealed things of the Scripture...

Often times, as we've talked before, somebody says, "I'm looking for the job that God wants me to have." Well the real issue isn't...you're not going to find what job the Lord wants you to have in the Scripture, but you'll find out the kind of man you need to be at the job you take. That's really what we're talking about when we say "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done." We're talking about being the right kind of person in the right situation. The real issue is who we are where we are. You'll find out what kind of an employee do I need to be in the job that you take, but you won't necessarily find the job that you should take. We have it backwards. We're thinking that there's a specific thing.

You know, somebody always says to me, "I want God's best." What does that imply? There could be less than God's best. That's an offense to God, because God is holy, God is righteous, God is perfect. Whatever he does is always the best. For us to say, "Well I'm holding out for God's best," that means that what he's revealed in the Scripture isn't good enough, so I'm still waiting for something better. We've got to be careful about how we think about that.

Remember, we talked previously about the commandment, of the Ten Commandments, "Do not take the Lord's name in vain." That is much more than just using words of profanity. You have to go past those words and what is the root cause of those words of exasperation or frustration. It's really because you've had thoughts that are unworthy of God. You see, that's the violation of the commandment, is when you and I have a thought that is unworthy of God, we're violating the commandment, "Thou shall not take the Lord's name in vain." You're thinking something that is diminishing the glory, the magnificence and the "awe"someness of who God is.

We need to be careful about how we think about God. If you're going to understand God's will in your life, then we really have to have a very humble spirit and keep our nose in the Book, because that's the means by which God will continue to reveal himself to us.

We come to this fourth petition, and that is the meeting of our physical needs, "Give us this day our daily bread." The word "daily" means of the day that is coming. Of the day that is coming. When we would pray this prayer, you pray it in the morning, it means you're praying for today. If you pray it at night, it means you're praying it for the next day. Literally, that phrase, "Give us this day our daily bread" means in the day that is coming. In the morning, it means the whole day before you; at night it means the next day. In other words, you're covered 24/7 all the time when we understand the spirit of this prayer, that we're really we're very dependent upon God's provision for us in all of his sovereign grace.

In the time of Jesus, a day's wage purchased a day's worth of food. A day's wage purchased a day's worth of food. The followers of Jesus were being taught by this prayer to learn to trust the Heavenly Father to meet their physical needs on a daily basis. That's a wonderful way to live, but it's a way that we Americans are not used to living because we always think that we're going to trust our 401k's and other things. Now there's nothing wrong with planning. Proper planning prevents poor performance. There's nothing wrong with planning. But who are we really trusting? You can do all the planning you want, but you've got to trust your planning to the Lord who is sovereign in all of this to really meet your

daily needs.

The Scriptures teach that God himself is the ultimate source of anything that is good in your life, whether it be food, whether it be clothing, whether it be your job, your work, your leisure, your strength, your intelligence, your friendship or whatever. According to James 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 4:8, whatever is good really comes as the result of God's grace in your life. That's why we ought to be motivated by gratitude in everything we do.

I had a conversation with a young lady the other day. She was talking, complaining about her parents because she was saying, "Well they give more money to my brother than they do to me." I said, "Tell me that again." She said, "They just gave my brother some money, and they didn't give me the equal amount." Now forgive my politicizing this, but I said, "You have been Obamacized." {LAUGHTER} "In other words, Obama has raised you well because you think you're entitled to it. You're entitled to nothing. Your parents don't owe you anything. Why do you think that just because they gave him X thousands of dollars, they owe you the same?" She said, "Because it's fair and equal." I said, "You've been Obamacized. You've been raised by Obama because the whole culture now is it's my title; I'm entitled to this. If somebody earns a million dollars, I need a portion of that because you've got to distribute the wealth evenly." You see, that's the mindset of America these days. We have this attitude of entitlement.

You see, what this prayer really teaches us here is you're not entitled to anything. The Scripture says to be content with food and clothing. That's it. Can you be content with just food and clothing? That's what Paul tells Timothy, "I've learned to be content with just food and just clothing." Can we be content with that? You see, the great American cancer is greed and lack of contentment because we think that we're trusting ourselves for our daily provisions. What the Scripture here is teaching us in this Disciple's Prayer is on a daily basis, that little phrase, in the day that is coming. When you pray that prayer in the morning, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread," you're saying, "For the next 18 or 20 hours, as I go through life, will you be my source of provision for everything. All my physical needs. You're the source of all of that." Then when you pray that at night, "Give us this day or daily bread," you're saying, "For the next day, the next day that you give me life is a gift. Will you be the source of all those things that I need. Will you be the source of all my sustenance?"

The Scripture makes it very, very clear that anything that is good in your life really comes from God as the source. That's what this little petition does. It reminds us in the Lord's Prayer that all of our sources of good come from him. He does not owe us these things, yet he gives us these things because of his immense love and commitment and grace to us.

As we talk about this, ingratitude is an insult to God. Do you realize that? Ingratitude is an insult to God. Our thankless generation is an affront to him, because we think that we're entitled to it. What is the only thing that you're entitled to? The Scripture makes it very clear. God has one standard of excellence. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins shall die. Both the Old and the New Testaments say that's the only thing you deserve. Have you ever sinned? Then why are you alive?

Audience Members: Grace.

Grace and mercy. You see, mercy. We need to understand three words. Justice—getting what we deserve. What is it we deserve? We deserve death. You see, when sin came into the garden, things were really uncomplicated at the Garden. Very smooth, until sin arrived. Then confusion arose at the Garden. Prior to sin entering into the Garden, there was no shame, there was no blame, there was no confusion and there was no death. That's the progression that you see ever since then. It just gets more intense and more heated when you see there's more blame, there's more shame, there's more confusion, because of

what sin does. And there's more death.

You see, the only thing that we deserve is really the punishment of our sin. That's justice. Getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Not getting all that you deserve. You see, you and I, along with every other human being who's ever been born has experienced God's mercy. It's just they don't know that. But you and I ought to know that. We ought to know that I'm a sinner, and God has not given me what I deserve yet. That's a function of mercy. You see, that's why we use the word "mercy" in our M8 little saying. We're an M8. We're a mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy. You see, because ingratitude as an offense to God.

The thankless nation that we live in is really an offense to God as a country, because we are so ungrateful for the things we have, because we've been reared in a culture that last several generations that says, "You're entitled to it. You're entitled to it."

You see, there's a wonderful lesson here that's much larger than just our daily sustenance. It's the attitude behind who are you trusting. Who are we trusting when we offer that petition in the prayer?

***Ted:** I struggle with this very issue you've raised, because I'm wondering if it's...it seems almost impossible in 2012 America for us not to rely on the reserves that we have. I mean, we've never had a more prosperous country in the world's history. We have these great reserves that are available to us and we just feel more comfortable when indeed our retirement is larger. My mom passed away last year. We got part of her estate. I'm feeling more comfortable. It's such a...it's a real problem. We're surrounded by such prosperity and cushions, that we expect that to be the case.*

Yes, we do. Good point. I know you well enough, Ted, I know that you're grateful for that, that your mother left you at the same time.

***Ted:** I'm very grateful.*

So you're very grateful, and yet, I understand the conflict, the feeling comfortable and gratitude at the same time...it's bucking heads against each other. That's part of Romans 7 that we live in.

***Bishop Rogers:** I was just going to say he could die tomorrow.*

***Ted:** What? {LAUGHTER}*

There will be no other questions. {LAUGHTER}

***Audience Member:** Then he'd be [UNCLEAR]...*

That's right. Then he would be in comfort. He would be in comfort.

***Bishop Rogers:** Take higher ground than your pension fund.*

That's right. You see, one of the things about...

***Don:** I understand the tension and the conflict, but did not Joseph, in the Old Testament, tell the people of Egypt to plan for [UNCLEAR] years of prosperity followed by great years of famine [UNCLEAR]. I don't think there's anything necessarily wrong with that. But see, the problem with our culture is that we trust in that rather than in God's provision.*

That's correct.

Don: *And it's only in God's provision that gives us these things.*

Absolutely. You see, who is the one who gives us the comfort, the provision? God does. We need to recognize that. There's nothing wrong with the planning, as I indicated. It's who are we trusting in the planning? When you do receive those cushions, do you realize that is a gift of God? That's why I'm trying to say this, that ingratitude is an offense to God. We've got to be very, very grateful for those comforts that we have, and we recognize where they come from and the source of them, so that we use them wisely. That's why I've tried to give you the spirit behind these different petitions in the Lord's Prayer. There's a spirit behind it, and it's not the spirit of entitlement. It's the spirit of gratitude, not ingratitude.

Brian: *I think one of the real challenges is we're so blessed, we as a church body don't bring that fruit forth as well as we ought to. There are so many people within our congregations who are suffering. My personal struggle, I don't have an answer to this yet, is how much should we give, I mean, do we give to the point of almost need ourselves? Is that the right thing to do? Whenever we see brothers struggling, or whatever, we have so much comfort [UNCLEAR]...*

Amen. I'm sure the Holy Spirit will lead you. {LAUGHTER}

Audience Member: *Bruce, we're called to be good stewards..*

Correct.

Audience Member: *We've been blessed and we ought to appreciate all that we've been blessed with, but that implies that you've got some resources to manage.*

Absolutely.

Audience Member: *And be good stewards of those resources.*

Absolutely. We're going to get into that. Remember we talked about, in Matthew 6, there are four areas which he talks about our worship lifestyle. One was fasting, one was praying, one of those is going to be our worship, and the other one is going to be how we manage our money. We're going to get into that. We're going to talk about how is that we manage our funds from a perspective of a Christian mindset, because that's an act of worship. Do you realize that money management for the believer is an act of worship? It's just not a financial activity. It's an act of worship. We'll get into that in a couple of weeks. It's really significant for us to recognize that the way that I manage my funds and the attitude I have behind them is really an act of worship because I'm demonstrating my trust, my obedience, my gratitude for God being the source of that.

We are stewards of everything. A steward really is somebody who manages other people's property. That's why you can't say it's "my" 401k. You really can't say that because, really, God is the source behind the sources of that 401k, but it's really his, the source of it, therefore, he owns it. You are the one who's just managing it. So we're going to get into that significantly, when we talk about meaningful money management from a biblical perspective, but it really is an act of worship.

Audience Member: *Several thoughts. One, I think, [UNCLEAR] the illustration of manna, God did not allow them to get more than they [UNCLEAR]. I think that fights against us having self-reliance [UNCLEAR], though the question would be what am I, you know, what am I doing to make sure that I*

continue to rely upon the Lord and not on myself.

Amen.

Audience Member: *He allowed them to store up for the Sabbath, so they didn't have to work at it. And then the other thing is the idea being purses that don't wear. God has said there is responsibility for care of ourselves, but just as far as we're [UNCLEAR]...what is enough for me versus amassing the kingdom and being reliant upon the Lord.*

Amen. One of the greatest things we, individually, as adults, could learn, and should pass on to our children, is this—the difference between a need, a want and a desire. The role of parents is to provide needs, not wants and desires. How do you help your child distinguish the difference between a need—something they need for their daily life. You've got to discern what that is. That's part of your budget planning. It's part of your personal management.

They're going to come to you and say, "Well, Betty's got this iPad." Well, you may not be able to afford that because she may not need that. But she's going to come to you and say, "Everybody else has got one. I feel like I'm outside the group because I don't have one of those things." Those are issues you're going to deal with.

One of the things we have to come to grips with ourselves, at the adult level, is what are my needs? Do I have wants and desires, and do I model that for my children? We've got to teach them the difference between a need, a want and a desire. It is not our responsibility as parents to provide their wants or their desires, only their needs. That's a tough thing to do, but the greatest thing we can do for our children, in our culture in America today, is teach them the difference between your responsibility to give them what they need, and what they want and what they desire, and help them understand the difference. That's one of the critical things that we're going to talk about under meaningful money management. We need to do that with our children because we need to teach that they're relying upon God as the source, and yes, we have comforts, and we can provide your needs, but we need to be grateful for all that, and we're not entitled to it. My concern is this whole entitlement issue.

Audience Member: *Dave Ramsey, in a book I was reading, [UNCLEAR], he doesn't throw it into their nests. [UNCLEAR]...out there.*

So you have to work for it. Absolutely.

Audience Member: *I know a man that, his family moved from a medium income neighborhood to a very wealthy neighborhood. His son, in fifth grade, came home, the first day of school, and he said, "Everybody has leather tennis shoes." And he said to his son, "We can afford canvas. But I heard there's a newspaper route open in the morning."*

There you go...you got to make up the difference. That's what I had to do with my step children. I sat them down and said, "Now I'm going to provide what you need. If there's something that you want, I will give you the money that will provide for the need; you make up the difference between the need and the want. If there's something you desire, you pay for the whole thing." That's how we did it. I took Amy out once to buy her tennis shoes to play tennis. Took her to Dick's. I said, "Amy, here's how much money I'm going to give you for your tennis shoes. That will cover what you need." She said, "But I want these." I said, "Fine. You can take your own money and make up the difference. I'll give you my portion; you make up the difference." She said I really desire these. I said, "That's all yours. You pay for the whole thing. What do you want?" She walked out with the ones that she needed. You see, you just do the whole thing.

Now it's interesting, now, when she goes shopping, her mother will say, "Oh, you ought to have this." She will say this, "I don't need it. This is all I need." Becky will say, "But you look so good in this. You need to have this." She'll say, "I know mom, but I only need this. I can get by with this." You see, you start that. Now she's doing a good job as an adult, 30-year old young lady. She's doing a good job understanding that concept of need, want and desire. So we need to be very, very specific about how we teach our children that.

Brian: *When you define desire, what do you mean by desire?*

Something that's more than what you want.

Tom: *But it is amazing how God works through your lives, and you go through periods of downtrodden and suffering. But he comes back and he meets, not only your needs, but he can do it in such a way that is in your desire [UNCLEAR] imagine because of his grace and his love for us.*

That's right. Amen.

Tom: *You just can't imagine how good God is.*

You see, we take his gifts for granted. We really do. We take his gifts for granted. And then, when they begin to dry up, or they're removed, we complain. And then what do we do? We call in question the very existence of a beneficial God.

In Romans 7, we were talking the other night, learning what the Scripture is teaching us. In the midst of all of our good, evil is present. Paul makes it very, very clear. Evil is with us. So you see, that really affects your attitude, infects our motives. Your intention may be the very best thing, but you've got to be aware that evil is right around the corner rearing its head, and there's that battle. You and I begin to realize that when the things dry up and things don't go the way we want, who do we begin to blame? We don't blame ourselves. We blame somebody else or we blame God, "How could God do that? If he were a loving God, he wouldn't let that happen." You see, we always fall back on our misperceptions of who God is. That's a sin because it's a thought that is unworthy of God. You see that? You see the evil that exists there? The sequence is so logical, "He's not providing, therefore he's not loving." Immediately, right there, you've violated the commandment because you have a thought that's unworthy of God, at that very moment, you see, the evil that exists right there, just by our thoughts.

So this is very, very serious stuff, how we consider our right view of God and realize that he is the source of all these goodnesses. That's why this little petition is so powerful. "Give us this day our daily bread" is really talking about moment by moment I'm trusting him as the source of all of the goodness in my life, just not my own achievements.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR] you're always struggling with you need a little bit more, you need a little bit more. The Lord said to me a couple of years ago what I've provided you is enough. You need to manage what I've given, and that's enough. Be grateful for that [UNCLEAR] satisfy you.*

Amen to that. See, we really have to realize that ingratitude is an offense to God. We just have to realize that.

In difficult times, it is the follower of Christ who will take refuge in this wonderful petition. That's where we'll take...you see, this is very, very powerfully encouraging, "Give us this day our daily bread." When you see things falling around you, you take refuge, you take comfort in realizing that I can

go to my Father because of the family spirit that we have, and we can pray, “Lord, provide for my needs. I’m going to trust you for that.” There’s great comfort in that.

Bob: *Bruce, it strikes me that that’s the path of our country. It seems that we’re going exponentially, as we move forward in time, from needs to wants to desires. It just seems like it’s moving in that direction all the time, in a fast rate.*

That’s correct. I read something the other day. Just to show you the subtlety of marketing. Last year, there were 12 billion catalogs sent out to American homes. Twelve billion catalogs sent out to American homes. That means that you and I individually are subjected to 20,000 advertisements per year. That means you and I are exposed to 1,600 advertisements per day. Sixteen hundred, that your eyes will come in contact, your ears will hear something like that on a daily basis. Unfortunately, you see, that just breeds consumerism. Unfortunately, the church has gone from theology to marketing. How is that we try to get people to come to our church? Marketing. Why is it...Dan, why did you come today?

Dan: *I heard about it through [UNCLEAR]...*

There you go. A friend invited you. That’s the greatest church expansion movement you can have is somebody invites somebody. Be honest, guys. How many of you, in this past year, have invited somebody to come to your church? Be honest. You see, every hand ought to be up. Every hand ought to be up. People are not going to come to the church because of marketing, not because of some gimmick.

I was talking to somebody recently who said, “How do you get 100 guys to come every Friday?” I said, “I don’t know.” {LAUGHTER} They said, “What’s your attraction?” I said, “Nothing.” “Then why do they come?” I said, “Because another brother asked them to come.” You see, that’s the attraction. It’s not marketing. It’s something’s happened in your life that is of value to you. It’s changed your life, and you want to give that away to somebody else, and you invite somebody to come. You see, that’s church growth. It’s not marketing. It’s not the latest sign or gimmick. It’s not the latest thing to attract them to come. It’s not the latest program that gets them to come. It’s the fact that one believer asked another person to come, and that’s the best form of church growth you could ever have.

Audience Member: *Bruce, I know you’re very humble, but I can tell you why I come. I come because I know that I will hear God’s truth spoken through your words.*

Well, you’ve been here long enough...thank you I appreciate that. That’s very kind. But you’re here long enough to know that that’s the intent of all of us who come. That’s the intent of all of us, is to come and sit at God’s feet where he teaches us through his Holy Spirit. I thank you for that. That’s very gracious of you.

My point is this. There’s nothing here to attract anybody. He said, “Well, do you have donuts?” {LAUGHTER} I said, “Well, sometimes somebody does.” “Well, what do you offer them?” I said, “Nothing.” You see, the point is this. We’ve gone to this mindset, we’ve gone to become consumerized in the church because we think that it’s marketing that brings people. No, it’s one person asking another person to come. That’s what brings people to the church.

Unfortunately, many of our seminaries are teaching preachers to preach to felt needs. Now there’s nothing wrong with that. The Lord’s going to meet our needs. There’s no question about that. I don’t think Paul took a survey at the church of Rome to figure out if he should write Romans 5, 6 and 7. If he did, he wouldn’t have written that because they weren’t interested in it. They didn’t want to hear Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. And yet, what do we do? We take a survey of the people to find out what is it you want? You see, that’s consumerism.

What has happened, unfortunately, in my judgment, many preachers today are nothing more than well-being consultants. They just want to make sure that people are being well. We just want to make sure we take care of their felt needs. I mean, you read Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. My goodness, it is just penetrating. It's just penetrating to the depths of your soul when you understand that.

You see, the role of pastor/teacher is to teach the Word. The Holy Spirit will function in the people's lives. My concern is that the church has become so market driven that we're buying into consumerism. We've gone from theology to consumerism, and marketing has been the strategy.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, I just have a question based on that [UNCLEAR]. My church, in the past year, has been doing surveys...I guess you'd call it survey...they kind of wanted to know what the congregation had questions in regards to theology or teaching. They kind of gave us an opportunity as a congregation to put in the offering plate with your offering like anything that you feel that you might want to learn more about. Is that like...?*

That's different.

***Audience Member:** That's different. Okay.*

Yeah. Those types of surveys are different. I'm not knocking surveys, per se. I'm saying what's the intention or motive behind your survey? That one would be legitimate to find out what are the spiritual needs of the flock, because I then, as the pastor, can address those from the pulpit. Your best biblical counseling occurs from the pulpit, not behind closed doors. The whole body needs to hear the same thing. That's where the Holy Spirit applies it to the individual believer differently. The best counseling occurs from your pulpit and the preaching of the Word. Something like that is going to help the pastor/teacher say, "This is what I need to emphasize."

The churches where I pastored, my elders always brought back to me because they were in touch with the flock very, very intimately. They came back to me and said, "Bruce, we need to stress this a little bit more," or "Could you deal with this because there's raising some confusion in the flock. Will you deal that?" That was very helpful to me. That's different than saying, "Let's come up and find out what you wants us to do so we can get more people to come to find out how you'll feel better." That's different. We're talking about different things.

***Audience Member:** Would you comment about churches that call themselves perhaps "seeker friendly." That's seems to be the emphasis of their message, especially on Sundays.*

That would not be the type of church that I would pastor.

***Audience Member:** The question that, I think, is what are they seeking?*

Well, the Scripture...Romans says no one seeks God.

***Audience Member:** Yeah.*

So why would you call it a seeker church if the Scripture says no one is seeking? Now I understand what it means, to seek. Their heart has been warm...but that's going to happen as a result of preaching the Gospel, not because of marketing. You see, what will cause somebody to seek correctly will be the proclamation of the law.

The Puritans, they always had what they called a “law work.” They said, “Nobody’s really going to understand the Gospel of Christ until they understand the law and its life and how they violated it.” So, you see, that’s why they started...their evangelism always started with the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. You start with who God is. That’s where you preach the law. The law is critical in evangelism. You see, and we don’t do that. We start with, “Are you going to be well off if you give your life to Christ?” You see, we start at the...we start with the benefits; we don’t start with the cause, in evangelism. We say, “Here’s what happens if you come to saving...invite Christ into your life, and you’ll have eternal life.” We talk about all the benefits. People say, “I want the benefits,” but they don’t want the Savior. So what’s going to cause them to seek the Savior is to realize they’re lost. That’s where the law comes in. You’ve got to start with the holiness of God.

Audience Member: And if they’re offended, then they...

The Gospel is offensive.

Audience Member: Pardon me?

The Gospel is offensive.

Audience Member: Yes.

Now it’s never our intent, as a preacher, to offend. It’s never our intent. When somebody’s come up to me, when I was preaching, in my church, week after week, they would come up to me and they would give some inference that, “You offended me.” My first question is, “Is it something I did to you that offended you?” They say, “No, it’s just what I heard.” Well then, I have to let that happen. You see, I can’t control that. I have to make sure that what I did personally was not offensive. If it was part of the message, then the message is going to be offensive. To a person who is unregenerate, hearing that God is holy is an offense, because it’s holding you to a standard that you don’t want to live up to.

Why is it that the people in America today don’t want the Ten Commandments in their schools or in their community parks anymore? They don’t want that because it’s offensive, because the law is exposing them in their unregenerate state. They’re convicted. You see, that’s what the law does. By design, that’s what it’s supposed to do. So people in America say, “Let’s get rid of the Ten Commandments because it’s an offense.” That’s the purpose of the law—it’s a schoolmaster to come to Christ.

Audience Member: Bruce, I have a question. How do you mobilize us, how do we get mobilized as men, in this area, to go out and [UNCLEAR] greatest message, the greatest story, the greatest hope for our neighbors, or community? What’s the most effective way to get that message out?

Go back to your church and do it. Work through the local church. That’s it. Don’t start a parachurch movement. Don’t get involved in some non-profit. Go back to your church. Take everything that we’re learning and take it back to your church. That’s where it’s going to happen. The design of the church is to change culture. It’s not my design as a person to change culture; it’s the design of the church to change culture. Go back and change your church and it’ll change the culture. Go back to your church. That’s how we get mobilized. Mobilize our churches. That’s where revival needs to occur. In the local church. Not in the streets of Pittsburgh. It needs to occur in the church because it supposes, revival supposes there is life. If you’re going to revive something, there has to be life. There’s not life in the world. There’s only life in the church. So let’s mobilize the churches and go back and give it there.

In difficult times, you and I will find great solace in this prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Let’s

take a quick look at the next one, which deals with our sins. The fifth petition concerns our sins, “Forgive our debts” or “Forgive our trespasses as we forgive our debtors.” Sin is pictured in this prayer as a debt which must be discharged. It’s a debt that must be discharged. This is not referring to a sequence. This is not a tit-for-tat thing. In other words, you forgive me, I’m going to forgive you. It’s not what we’re talking about. It’s not do I forgive someone so the Lord will forgive me. It’s speaking about an attitude. It’s talking about an attitude of forgiveness.

You see, there’s no forgiveness to the one who does not forgive because an unforgiving spirit bears strong witness to the fact that there may be no repentance. The real issue here is I don’t forgive you because I want you to forgive me. Let’s go to Colossians 3:12, “Put on then…” Now that implies what? Certainly you’re naked. But it implies what in my responsibility?

Audience Member: *Action.*

Action. It’s a choice I make. It’s your responsibility to put on. The imagery Paul is using here is put on like you do clothes. He’s saying this is the attire of a person who’s regenerate. Purposefully take on these attributes, these characteristics, and have that be the garment you’re going to wear this day in your conduct.

“¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:12-14) Why is it you forgive someone? Because you know you’ve been forgiven. That’s what Jesus said in his first staff meeting, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.”

You know grieves my heart most often? How quickly I want to be vengeful. How quickly I don’t want to forgive. You see, that says more about me than it does the person who offended me. It reveals to me that I don’t understand completely God’s mercy to me as a sinner. I really don’t understand what it means to have been forgiven. The reality is this—how can I not forgive him this time, when Christ has forgiven me all the time? All the time. That’s justification by faith alone. All the time. There’s no condemnation anymore. I’m no longer in Adam; I’m in Christ. That has happened all the time. And yet I have the audacity to say, “I have a right to be hurt.” You see, that says more about me than it does the person who hurt me. How can I say, “How can I forgive you for something so little, when Christ has forgiven me something that is so much?”

Don: *Corrie Ten Boom, I read something that she had written where she was giving a speech at some church or something on her experience during the Holocaust and hiding Jews and everything like that and the importance of forgiveness. Unbeknownst to her, someone came up to her and said, “I’m one of the guards in the concentration camp that mistreated you. Can you forgive me?” For a minute there, she couldn’t, she just couldn’t stick her hand out. But then, she just prayed that the Lord would give her strength to do it, and she did, and they hugged. He had become a Christian in the meantime. So there you go. Forgiveness.*

You see, that’s not natural.

Don: *No.*

That is not natural. Forgiveness is absolutely, out of this world, it is supernatural, because it’s a function of grace. You are not the resources of your forgiveness. What Paul is telling the Colossians is, “You forgive because you know that you’ve been forgiven all the time. You forgive this time because how can

you hold that little thing against them when you've been forgiven so much." You see, he's talking about here, "Forgives us our trespasses or forgives us our debts." He's not talking about a tit-for-tat, I'm going to do this so you'll do that for me. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about an attitude. He's talking the attitude of how do you respond to the offenses of life. That is not natural, brothers. That is absolutely supernatural. Try to do it in your own strength, and you're going to fail, because even though the intention is there, evil is right behind it saying, "Wait a minute. Get an ounce of skin here before you do it."

There's that battle in Romans 7 that says, "I really want to do this, I've got a right to be hurt. I've got a right to be offended." I'm glad that Christ didn't say that. I've got a right to be offended. I'm glad it was this. The old Gospel hymn, "When I was on the cross, Bruce, you were on my mind." Do you understand that? When he was on the cross, you, by name, were on his mind, so that in the year 2012, when somebody offends you, you can have an absolutely out of this world, supernatural response motivated by the Holy Spirit that says, "I forgive you because I know I have been forgiven." You see, this is talking about an attitude. It's not talking about a tit-for-tat I'll do this, you do that. It's an attitude behind it. It's really exposing us. Do we really understand how much I've been forgiven? How much I've been forgiven. That's the beauty of this petition.

Let me just take you to one other passage for a moment. Go to 2 Corinthians 5. I won't touch on this long, but I think it has...an extension of our forgiveness attitude. 2 Corinthians 5. It has to do with the ministry of reconciliation. Let me say this at the outset. In Ephesians 2, God was the one who destroyed the barrier between the holy of holies and broke down the barrier at the cross. At the moment Christ died, the temple was rent, and it was destroyed. The separation between the spiritual and the non-spiritual people was separated, and they all potentially now could become one because of the cross.

Who was the offended party at the cross?

Audience Member: God.

God was. Who took the initiation in reconciliation?

Audience Member: God.

God did. Do you realize this? That it is the offended party's responsibility to initiate reconciliation? It's not the offender's; it's the offended. Who was the offended one? God was. Who took the initiation? Listen to this in 2 Corinthians 5:12-18, "¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

Who did the initiation of reconciliation? God did. In our life today, when there's an offended group, there's an offended person, who has the responsibility to take the initiation, if they want reconciliation? It's the offended party. The offenders come and ask forgiveness.

Let's just say that Jay offended me, and he's coming to me to ask forgiveness. If I have not been

predisposed before he comes to say, “I’m not going to hold his sins against me.” Notice the rest of those verses in 2 Corinthians 5:18b-19, “¹⁸Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” What is the responsibility of the offended person? Not to hold their sins against them, if you want reconciliation.

There can be no reconciliation unless the offended party says, “I’m not going to hold your sins against me.” When Jay comes and says, “Do you forgive me,” I say, “Yes!” Because I’m predisposed before he ever comes to saying, “I am not going to hold his sins against me.”

Now we’ve got it backwards in racial reconciliation. We think its restitution, not reconciliation. As difficult as this is, it is the offended group’s responsibility to say, “We are not going to hold their sins against us, so that reconciliation can be possible.” What we’ve come up with in our culture today is a strategy that says there must be restitution before there can be reconciliation. That’s backwards. There’s a difference between restitution and reconciliation. Reconciliation occurs when I, as a person, says, “I am predisposed because I understand that Christ has forgiven me, that when somebody offends me, my inclination is this, because of the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit and God’s grace, I’m not going to hold their sins against them.” That means reconciliation is possible.

When Jay comes to me and says, “Bruce, will you forgive me?” I say, “Yes,” because I’m predisposed not to hold his...because I understand this. That’s what Christ did to me. I was reconciled to God. God wasn’t reconciled to me. He was the offended party. He did what was necessary so that when I said, “Lord, would you forgive me?” he said, “Yes! There’s a reconciled relationship.”

Notice the ministry we have. We have been given the ministry, the message of reconciliation. We cannot reconcile anybody. All we can do is give the message, and that is don’t hold their sins against them. Reconciliation is possible. Do you see the power of that? That is so powerful. That’s all wrapped up in this idea, “Lord, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” It really is the foundation and beginning of the ministry of reconciliation. Biblical reconciliation, not cultural. There’s a big difference.

Let’s pray. Father, this is overwhelmingly powerful in our lives, and it’s supernatural. Father, help us never make the Gospel human. Don’t let us bring it down to mankind’s level just for the sake of marketing. Help us recognize always that the Gospel is not human; it’s supernatural because it has its origin in your heart and in your mind and in your soul, and it’s empowered by your Holy Spirit. Father, give us this message of reconciliation to a world that is so lost, that is so confused because of sin, because of the blaming and the shaming and the confusion and the death that’s brought about by sin. Father, we have the message, the message of reconciliation. May we be gracious and proclaim the truth. May we teach it to the point of understanding. And all God’s Brave Men said...Amen!