

“Prayer” Pt 2

2 Thessalonians More About the End Times

2 Thessalonians 3:1-6

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Jeff: Our great God, we thank You and praise You that You are the only God, and that You've revealed Yourself so magisterially in the creation. And yet due to our sin we suppress it in unrighteousness and have ever since Adam fell in his original sin. And yet, Lord, You were gracious to us, to Adam's posterity, by sending Your only-begotten Son into the world that we might have life and have it abundantly through Him, and that by faith alone. And yet that is not of our own either, but a gift from Your hand. Lord, these things are great and wonderful, and encouraging to the heart and soul. And as we bow before You this morning we are thankful for this good word to us from Your word. And we ask that You would bless us in it.

Lord, we certainly pray that as we go about our day that Your hand would be upon us for good, not only edifying our own spirits, but also, Lord, help us to be overflowing that we might minister to others. Father, we are living in a world that lacks kindness and love. And Lord, we pray that we would be gentle and yet strong enough to demonstrate that love, that kindness that our Savior demonstrated to us. Father, Your Spirit is in us. And You prompt us, You move us, You even pray within us when we know not what to pray for. So You've given to us a deposit, a guarantee of better things yet to come. And yet Your Spirit invigorates a life of faith even now. And so we pray that would be manifest to others and useful to others. Certainly we pray that it would be useful in bringing them to saving faith.

Father, as we come before You we come before You with needs, with longings of the heart. And certainly, Father, we ask and pray that You'll be with Matt and those at Pine Valley. We pray, Father, for Your hand to be upon that place for good. We pray that it would do a great deal of ministry and provide a great deal of opportunity for fruit-bearing in Your kingdom.

Father, we also pray for our brother Kevin, and ask that even as we commit him to You that You will continue to minister to him. And Father, we pray for our brother Bruce and for his wife. And Lord, we also pray for Kevin's wife, even as she has elected not to get knee surgery. Lord, we ask that You'll minister to her even as she has elected to minister to her husband in lieu of her own needs.

Father, we pray for Gregg, and we ask that You will be with him, continually strengthening him. And Father, we certainly pray for Roger and Michelle as they lay Michelle's father to rest today. Lord, thank You for the faith that was exhibited in his life, a faith not his own but a faith originating with You as You worked in his life. And Father, we pray that even in their sorrow that they would have room for joy, joy knowing that Russ is with his heavenly Father even now.

And Father, we just pray that You'll bless us today as we gather together to study Your word. We need encouragement; we need a place to stand. And Father, You provide that for us in Your word, a Word that You've inscripturated and preserved for the comfort of Your church. And Lord, we ask that You would comfort us now, even now, for we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

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Jeff: Okay. Well, let me remind you where we are in our walk through 2 Thessalonians. In #5 we are in that section “Pray For Us.” And so we’re looking today at chapter 3 and verses 1-6. And here was the outline that I shared with you the last time we were together. But I think I’ll give Don an opportunity if he has brought his Bible to open it up and turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. Are you doing that now, Don or are you reaching for that tape recorder?

Don Maurer: No.

Jeff: Ah, he has the book; okay. So what we’re going to do today is this. We looked last time at the introductory material that I wanted us to think about as we entered into this topic on prayer. And then we looked at the prompt to pray. Today we’re going to look at points 2 and 3 maybe: the objective of prayer and then the confidence that we have in prayer. So we’re going to look at those things today. And Don, do you have 2 Thessalonians chapter 3:1-6?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Would you start reading them?

Don: 1-6?

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Okay. *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.*

“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

Transcriber’s Note: NKJV.

Don: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. Why don’t we look today first of all at the objective of prayer? And again I want you to think about how the next two points work together: the objective of prayer and the confidence we have in prayer. And those things certainly do work together. When we recognize not only how to pray but what God’s objective is in our prayers and what our objective ought to be in prayer there is a confidence that we have that arises from prayer that’s not artificially built up or welling up within us, but that comes from the living God. And basically it comes from a right application of the means of prayer. And so it’s an encouragement to us.

And I think that maybe I’ll just say this in brief, and hopefully it will make sense as we go along. But oftentimes I think we have a tendency to manufacture some of the feelings that the Holy Spirit is intended to produce. And the reason why we do that is because we short-circuit some of the things that God calls us to do. And if we don’t do them we don’t have the right kind of confidence. We don’t have the right kinds of feelings oriented toward God or toward others. And so we have to manufacture that when it should be the most natural thing in the world because it arises from a Christian life well lived; that’s the idea. Hopefully that will make sense as we go along.

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But let me turn our attention to the arrangement of Paul’s prayer for just a minute. I want you to see how the arrangement of Paul’s prayer really does focus on the Lord’s Prayer. And I want you to see that in just a couple of ways here. I’m going to look at this screen; it’s a little easier for me.

But notice: the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer and Paul’s petition here, notice how it looks. *“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Now notice how Paul applies this first petition in his own prayer: *“that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as has happened among you.”*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff is reading from the ESV.

Jeff: Do you see what he’s praying for? He’s praying even as the Lord’s Prayer asks for the kingdom to come and the Lord’s will to be done; as it is in heaven so let it be on earth. And look at what Paul’s prayer is: that the word of the Lord—that is, God’s kingdom—and I want you to think about that for just a minute. When we think about the kingdom of God coming we think about the kingdom of God coming in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And theologically that’s called *autobasalias*. *Basalias* is the word for *kingdom*; *auto* is *self*. It’s Christ’s self-kingdom; it’s His kingdom coming in its own manifestation on earth. And that kingdom is in large part His word. That is to say, He Himself is the Word and became the climax of the words spoken of Him in the Old Testament. And what does He leave behind inscripturated? The Word that speaks of Him. And so there’s a sense in which we see a synonymous nature between the kingdom of God and the word of God.

So this is what he’s praying. And so he says *“that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as has happened among you.”* Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. He’s praying that the word of the Lord—the kingdom of the Lord—may speed ahead, that it would be manifest on earth.

And then he says this, and here’s the striking thing: *“even as it has been manifest among you.”* That is to say, you are evidence that the kingdom of God has come and has been made manifest among you. And so the great thing about this is that even though we talked about and started this whole segment thinking about some of the difficulties of prayer and the failures that often accompany the prayer life, one of the things that we reminded ourselves of last week is that prayer, though it’s our responsibility, is certainly not the means by which we are saved, certainly not the means by which we are pleasing to God. We are pleasing to God because of what Christ accomplished on our behalf. But as evidence of that we pray; that’s one of the things we do. And God so delights to answer our prayers and bring about the things that He has commanded us to pray.

I want you to think about that for just a minute. This takes us back to the very first lesson that we had on prayer, and I just want to remind you of it for just a minute because sometimes we say, “Oh, I just don’t know what to pray for.” And I said to you that if we go to the Old Testament one of the things that we find is that the watchmen on the wall is an example of our prayer life. Why? Because the watchman pleads the promise that God gave to him back to God until God answers it. And when God answers it God gives us great delight because He’s brought to fruition that which He has promised.

Now think about the Lord’s Prayer. Here’s an example of the Lord giving us a promise: “Pray that My kingdom will come.” And what are we supposed to do? We’re

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supposed to pray that the kingdom would come, and then delight and rejoice when He answers that. That’s a very similar pattern to what we see in the Old Testament. Yes?

Matt Reichart: I didn’t understand your analogy of the watchmen and prayer. How does that coincide?

Jeff: Yes. So let’s go back to Isaiah 62. In Isaiah 62 notice; this is verse 6. And the Lord says:

*“On your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have set watchmen.
All the day and all the night
They shall never be silent.
You who put the LORD to remembrance take no rest,
And give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem
And makes it a praise in the earth.”*

So here are these watchmen on the wall. And they are to be there night and day, and what are they to do? Give the Lord no rest by reminding Him—putting Him to remembrance—of what? O what He has promised to do. That is to say, give the Lord no rest until He brings those things about.

And then, for instance, we find in Isaiah—I can’t think of the text; I think it’s in chapter 52 where we find a similar illustration in verse 8 where the fruition comes to pass; that is verse 8 of 52:

*“The voice of your watchmen,
They lift up their voice;
Together they sing for joy.
For eye to eye they see
The return of the LORD to Zion.”*

And so that is to say, they see the promise being fulfilled by the Lord. And that’s a text that’s quoted in Romans; that’s the Lord coming and us rejoicing. And so here’s an example of Old Testament saints pleading that God would bring about His promise of for instance bringing the Kingdom to earth as pictured in the life of the people of Israel. Now here it comes in Jesus Christ, and they rejoice. So that’s the idea.

Matt: So that encourages my heart, because so many people ask the question: Why pray?

Jeff: Yes, that’s it; absolutely.

Matt: We say that we’re commanded to, but we faithfully do it. If we don’t pray and He answers it, then how does that strengthen our faith? But if we do pray, and cast our anxieties on Him, He eventually does answer prayers.

Jeff: Yeah. You know, when you think about just a simple illustration with that, let’s say you have this little boy and you have a father. And let’s say the little boy is asking a question. Let’s say the father is a mechanic. And he takes this boy everywhere and this boy is learning, and his boy is just a little boy.

And so the father’s friend is standing there. He says, “I’ll bet you’ll be changing engines someday, right?” And the little boy says something that he’s heard from his father. He just mimics what his father is saying. And the man looks at the father and smiles. “That was really good.” And the boy simply beams because he’s delighting the father by simply mimicking the father’s own words.

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And so that’s the idea, right? We’re simply speaking God’s words back to Him and delighting when He fulfills it. And that gives us a great amount of joy, right? And so anyway you get the idea here with Paul using it.

Notice this, the second petition: “*Deliver us from the evil one.*” Many people will say, “*Deliver us from evil,*” as if it were evil in general. But the adjective is what’s called a substantival adjective. And so it’s not just evil in general. You have to put “*the evil one*” because it’s indicating that it’s modifying an undefined person or thing. So “*the evil one*” is a more appropriate way of doing that. So the second petition that I want us to think about in regard to the Lord’s Prayer is “*deliver us from the evil one.*”

And then Paul’s application of that petition in 2 Thessalonians is “*that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.*” And so here it is, right? He’s simply taking the Lord’s Prayer and he’s applying it in his own prayer.

And I would simply say at this point that, for instance, Paul is saying “Deliver us from the evil and wicked men who are in the likeness of the antichrist.” Remember how we talked a while ago about the spirit of the antichrist being in every age. And he’s simply saying, “Deliver us from the evil manifestations of the antichrist in every age; deliver us from them.” And so that’s how he’s applying the prayer.

So in other words the object of prayer, our objective in prayer, ought to be to pray what God wants for His people. And what does He want for His people? Well, a good manifestation of that is in the Lord’s Prayer. And here we have Paul simply taking petitions from the Lord’s Prayer and praying them back to God.

So let’s take a look then a little closer at this. I think we see that this is the strategy of prayer. Maybe I should pause and ask you. I said a lot last time about the stream of consciousness of prayer. And this is really over against that idea of the stream of consciousness of prayer. And I think it’s a strategy I talked about in the first talk; that’s why I’m bringing it to your attention again. Maybe you want to talk about that now in the light of what we’ve said here. Don?

Don Maurer: Yes. As far as the stream of consciousness is concerned, I don’t want to make light of this, because we are to come to God with all of our petitions.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: But a lot of times it’s been said that a lot of prayer meetings turn into organ recitals. I’m praying for my big toe that hurts, or whatever. Again I don’t want to make light of this, particularly when we’re praying for Kevin or whoever; people have real needs. But the priority in prayer here in the 2 Thessalonians passage or in the Lord’s Prayer is always first and foremost the glory of God and the coming of His kingdom, that kind of thing.

Jeff: You know, you raise a really good question, because let’s say that we put a circle on the board, Don. And then we put in that circle the distinct promises of God, all right? And then we say these are things that we know we can pray for with confidence, and have confidence that God will answer them. “*Your kingdom come.*” We know that God is going to bring His kingdom. In fact He already has brought His kingdom in Jesus. And the manifestation of that by His Spirit applying Christ and His work is going to happen. And it’s going to happen because we’re commanded to pray that it happens, and He has ordained that it would. So that would be an example.

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So the Kingdom coming. Delivering us ultimately from evil, the evil one and his work, right? “Don’t fear him who can kill the body; fear Him who can cast the soul into hell.” We’re going to be delivered from evil.

“*Our daily bread.*” That’s another manifestation that we pray for: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” Those are concrete things the Lord has said. Pray for these and I will be faithful to answer.

But what about the organ recital that Don mentioned? That seems to fall outside of the circle. And Don, I’m going to disagree with you just a little bit. Derek Thomas is the one who said this, and I wish he would have never said it frankly, because as a pastor, any time our prayer services have a segment of praying for people—Aunt Betty’s kidneys or whatever—someone always reminds me of Thomas’s statement that prayer services turn into organ recitals.

And the question that I want to know is, where does this fit into this circle, if I can put it kind of crassly? Well here is what I would say to you, Don. I would say to you that in Matthew chapter 8 we find this. “*And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she rose and began to serve them. That evening they brought to Him many who were oppressed by demons. And He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.’”*

Now that’s from Isaiah 53. And we have a tendency to say that Isaiah 53 is an atonement text. In other words, it’s a text about Jesus dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. And we have a tendency to limit its application to atoning for sins.

And yet here in Matthew chapter 8 Matthew says that Jesus coming and healing the sick fulfills Isaiah 53. Why? Because yes, Isaiah 53 is about atonement. But what is atonement about? It’s about healing; it’s about ultimate healing. And what is Jesus doing? He is giving a picture of what ultimate healing will look like in the here and now.

I heard Sinclair Ferguson give this illustration; I think it’s really helpful. What are the miracles? What is that miracle supposed to do for us? He says well, it’s like walking into a room that’s totally dark. And you flip the light switch on and the light bursts into the room, and then it goes out because the bulbs burn out.

But he says think about it. After that happens your mind is left with an imprint of what that room looks like. You could actually navigate that room quickly through that burst of light that just came into the room. And he said that miracles are like that burst of light. They’re showing us the entire room, what it’s going to look like at the end of all things. Lazarus coming forth from the grave is the light coming on and saying that this is what the end will look like. And it gives us that taste of it.

Now Isaiah 53 is about atonement, but it’s bigger than that; it’s about ultimate healing. Then why can’t I pray for healing in those I love now? Why can’t Isaiah 53 be pled on behalf of those with kidney problems or with knee problems or with cancer, right? Because I’m praying that this person would be given a burst of what the end will ultimately look like, but even now, just now in their life. You have a taste of that. Why not that?

Don: Oh, I agree.

Jeff: No, no, Don; you’ve had your time. (*Laughter*) Go ahead.

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Don: No, I completely agree with you.

Jeff: I thought you might. *(Laughter)*

Don: It’s just that a lot of us—maybe not us—but a lot of people limit their prayers to that, and don’t pray for the bigger picture.

Jeff: I agree with that too, 100%.

Don: I think that those times of prayer would probably be in the purview, at least in my own prayer time, of “*Give us this day our daily bread*”—our earthly concerns.

Jeff: Yeah. Yes?

Matt: Just to piggyback on what Don said, you know, we’re an evangelistic ministry. And so I ask the question. We look at that verse. “*Pray for us that the word of the Lord would spread rapidly and be glorified.*”

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: That means God in Christ; myself included. Do I pray this prayer every day: that the word of the Lord would spread rapidly wherever my world is?

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: If we abandon that and we don’t pray for power, what would be released? What is not being done or accomplished? Because whenever it’s an issue of prayer, when we don’t pray God doesn’t move.

Jeff: That’s right. You know, the beautiful thing is that God answers prayer. And the worst thing about us is that we become practical atheists when we don’t pray, right?

Well, I think there’s a good strategy here then. And the good strategy is that we take Scripture and we use it in our prayer time. And we use it to pray. So let’s take a closer look at a problem raised earlier.

Now notice; remember what he said. He said, “Pray that the Word would run.” So here’s the question that Matt just asked us. Why don’t we pray? And one of the things that we say is this. We say, “Well, I don’t pray.” Now we’re not so fast as all this. But this is what it amounts to. We say, “Well, you know, I don’t pray. If I don’t pray it’s not like the God of heaven and earth is in some way or in some sense going to lose His sovereign purpose and go off kilter, and something isn’t going to happen that would have happened otherwise, because God is sovereign. And if God is sovereign He’s going to do what He wants when He wants without me.”

And in fact this is what some people say. Some people will say, “Even my inattentiveness to prayer is in His sovereign purposes! So I am functioning according to the sovereign purpose of God even by not praying!” That’s kind of the idea. And that’s poor theology. *(Laughter)*

All right now, think about this. We are to pray that His word would run; think about that. Now listen to Psalm 147:15:

*“He sends out His command to the earth;
His word runs swiftly.”*

That’s pretty neat, because we are to pray that God’s word will run. And God commands His word and His word runs swiftly.

Now the question is this: does God need my prayer? And this is what we talked about earlier. We talked about good theology and bad behavior. Good theology is yes, I believe God is sovereign. And His word is set out to run by His command. And then the bad theology that comes as a result—or I should say that my bad behavior that comes as a

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result of my good theology is to think that I just don't have to pray because God is sovereign. And so the question then becomes why pray?

Well let me try to walk you through something and see if you may have questions about it as we do this. First of all I think this is the process. God commands it. We want to commune with God. We want what God wants. And we want to know what it is that God wants. And so we want to know His will.

So I think that it begins with the commandment of God. But I think that if we are believers then we want to commune with God, right? I think this is probably best captured in a simple illustration that you have probably heard before. And that is if I get married I'm certainly commanded to be faithful to my spouse and to live with her alone and to forsake all others, and so forth. But if I say, "That's good enough; I don't want to have any communion with her. I don't want to have any discussions with her. I don't want to get into any talks with her. I don't want to really get to know her or anything."

My wife is going to come back to me and say, "Why did you marry me?"

And I would say, "Well you know, think about our commandment, dear—the commandment that we have to uphold before the Lord. Are we being faithful in that commandment?"

And she's going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. But the commandment isn't a bare commandment. The commandment to be faithful to one another is foundational. But that foundational commandment provides for communion. That is to say that I know that if you're going to forsake all others and be faithful to me alone, then I'll be able to share with you the deepest things of my heart. I trust you with them and you with me. And then we're going to want to know what it is that pleases one another. What is it that's at root in your heart that causes you to tick? And I know I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to get to that, and you will too."

But you see, the commandment, that's just the bare minimum. That's just the foundation of this whole thing. There's so much more that is built on it. Or if you flip it over, there's so much more underneath it as we drill down into the relationship.

If we say to God, "Well I'm commanded and that's why I pray," we are at the very foundational level of marriage, if I can bring that illustration up. It's one thing if someone's marriage is on the rocks and they appeal to that commandment. I mean, that's what they're holding onto at the moment. But who wants to always stay there? Who wants to be just barely hanging on, right? I mean, I would think that the reason why we get married is that we want a deeper intimacy with one person. And that wife of ours—or us as husbands—that provides a lot of enrichment for the rest of life. Why do we not think about our relationship with God in the same way? Any questions or any thoughts you want to share about that?

Don Bishop: That's a good analogy. In Ephesians 5 Paul figures that out. Marriage is a picture of the church.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: So the depth of our relationship with Christ should be as good or better than our relationship with our spouses.

Jeff: Yes. In fact that whole idea of the husband and wife relationship is given to civilization because it does mirror Christ's relationship to His church. And when you think about that you can really continue to press that, because when God confronts Saul on the Damascus road He says, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting the church." No, he

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doesn't. He says, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”* And the idea is that if you persecute them you are persecuting Me; there is such an intimacy between them. Okay; anybody else?

Okay, so let's take a closer look at the petitions. And here we're driving to a question that asks us how to pray. And so Paul also wants God's word to be honored. In 2 Thessalonians we are to pray that His word runs forward. But that means that God's word is not different from God.

Look, for instance, at Acts 13:48. *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”*

Do you see that? Then what is the implication of that? The implication of that is that they were glorifying the Word. And in so doing they were glorifying God.

I don't know about you, but I've been in some liberal settings. I had a master's degree from a liberal seminary. I talked to the professor after class one day. And he took up his Bible and he said this to me once. He said, “Jeff, do you really believe that this is the word of God?”

And I said, “Well, I do.” *(Laughter)*

He then threw it on the floor and he stepped on it. And he said, “I'm stepping on the word of God then.” He looked at me. “Do you think I'm stepping on the word of God, Jeff?”

I said, “I do.” *(Laughter)* But the idea is—

Matt: No lightning came down?

Jeff: No lightning came down. I think that was his next statement to me, right? But the idea is that this is the word of God.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Now if I were to say to you that I just happened to be out and about in Turkey and found the original of Paul's letter to the Ephesians; here it is! The papyrus disintegrates in my hand. If I would say that I have the letter to the Ephesians here, what am I saying? I'm saying I have the actual scroll and the words on the scroll. Here I have the actual words that are upon this scroll. So there's a distinction there, right? The original is not only the original words but the original document. But I have the original words in the copy, in this document.

When I said that I didn't really have the time to explain to this professor that I don't believe that I have some kind of talisman like Thanos was trying to get in the movie “The Avengers.” He was trying to get the original stones so that he could control the world. I don't have the original scroll. But I have the words that were on that original scroll. That's what I mean when I say that I have the word of God.

And all of a sudden the subject changes, because he thinks that I'm thinking that this is some kind of talisman; you know what I mean? And if I'm soiling the talisman I must be violating God in some way. But the idea is that we have the word of God, and that there's nothing wrong.

You know, we're often accused of being Bibliolaters because we say that this is the word of God; it's infallible and inerrant. And they say, “You're a Bibliolater; the Bible is your idol.”

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No, the Bible is not my idol, because there is no separation between this Word and the God who has spoken. And so I’m not a Bibliolater. But OI do glory in the word of God because it is God’s word; that’s the idea. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: Bibliolatry would be what some people do in some circles when they kiss the Bible. That would be more—

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. So the point of this is that we ought to pray for the saved. That is, we ought to pray that the word of God would run forward, because when we do that we’re praying that the kingdom of God would go forward.

Paul also asks to be delivered “*from wicked and evil men.*” I want you to see this. Is it that we’re going to be delivered from the evil one, or delivered from evil? And I said to you already that you know that the adjective is a substantival adjective, which means that it’s functioning as a noun because it has an article like the word “the” in front of it. And in this case it has the word “the” in front of it, and there’s no actual noun that it’s modifying. So you know that it’s functioning substantively. This adjective is including both the adjective and the noun, and so you have to kind of add the “one.” And so it’s the evil one because there’s no noun that it’s modifying. So here we’re delivered from the evil one.

Now look at Paul’s prayer. It’s not “deliver us from some abstract evil.” But it’s “deliver us from evil men.” And this should be our prayer. And this should be the prayer that we teach our children to pray—not that we’re delivered from some abstract evil, as if to say that because life gives me difficulties God’s prayer is failing me. No, we are to pray that we will be delivered from wicked and evil men.

I mean, think about this, right? This gives prayer a more concrete aspect. And the other thing I would say is—and you have to always add—I mean, I would say this to you. Sometimes the lives of people we love are taken by other people. And sometimes the people we love are believing people, and yet their lives are still taken.

You know, I’ve told you before that my brother was murdered. And so did God’s word fail? And the answer is no, because Jesus tells us in Matthew, “Don’t fear the one who can kill the body. Fear the One who can cast soul and body into hell.” God’s word did not ultimately fail; His promise did not ultimately fail.

And it may appear that way. I love how Paul says these things. Hey, they can only kill you; don’t worry about it. And we think that’s ultimate. No, that’s not ultimate. Nobody wants to be killed, and nobody wants their relative to be killed, those people that we love—friends, relatives—nobody wants that. Nobody wants the missionaries that we send forth from the church to be killed; nobody wants that. But the idea is that even if they are killed, God’s promise to hold them in His keeping did not fail. God’s promise of ultimate deliverance did not fail, and that’s the idea. And that is what we need to teach our children, because too often I think our children come away with a superficial understanding of what we mean by something like deliverance from evil, or deliverance from the evil one. They might come to believe that God’s prayer has failed because people are hurt and people are scandalized and people are killed. And God’s word did not ultimately fail and does not ultimately fail.

And then *the confidence that we have in prayer.* I should say this: the confidence we have in the God to whom we pray; that’s a better way to put it. Yes, there’s a confidence that comes from praying. But that confidence comes from having the God to whom we pray.

“Prayer” Pt 2

So I want you to think about this for just a minute: *“deliver us from the evil one.”* And yet, if you look at the letter of 1 Thessalonians, some people died. They got that, right? So it makes you wonder. Did some of these people have this misunderstanding? That’s why Paul is clearing this up. It’s not *“deliver us from evil”* in the abstract; it’s *“deliver us from the evil one.”* Yes?

John Gratner: So I guess it’s one thing to pray to be delivered from the evil one or delivered from evil men. But where do you draw the line between asking to be delivered and asking for God to actually condemn them?, because you see Jesus as the example. He says, “Forgive them; they don’t know what they’re doing.” But then in the Psalms you see passages like chapter 5 verse 10, where it says:

“Make them bear their guilt, O LORD;

Let them fall by their own counsels.

Because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out.”

He’s not just saying, “Deliver me,” but he’s almost saying, “God, condemn them.”

Jeff: Yes. I think that the two are not incompatible. But I think the two are sometimes incompatible in our own practice of prayer. So for instance, we ought to be praying for, or at least having the posture of forgiveness, even as we believe and know that wicked men will fall upon the cornerstone of the Lord Jesus Christ. And my own view is that the Psalms are the ultimate manifestation of evil men falling upon the Cornerstone. And so that will happen.

Typically I think for instance that the church ought to take those upon their lips. I think the church ought to take those imprecatory Psalms on their lips. I think they ought to sing them. I think they ought to pray them. I think they ought to read them. And I think they ought to believe them. And I think that we ought to do those things always with the mind of Christ. In other words, the enemy of Christ will ultimately fall, be ensnared, be punished, be condemned.

But it’s when I’m in a situation, and that situation is a difficult one and I find myself at odds with people I move toward *“Father, forgive them.”* And maybe I need to be forgiven in this. And I really do leave the Psalm aspect of it to my public praise and my private reading. But I don’t bring that into my prayer. “Lord, let them be caught in their own snare,” because I realize that when I’m in a situation with a person I may be at more fault than I think I am, right? So I think Christians ought always to default to “Lord, search me and know me. Expose any unworthy thought that’s in me. Help me to have a posture and an attitude of forgiveness toward the other person who I’m engaged with,” knowing all the time that the enemies of Christ are going to be caught up in their own snares, are going to be judged, are going to be condemned, and so on. Hold on a second.

Gary Craig: I’ve always heard people take that phrase *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,”* I’ve heard people take that as a generic statement. The context is that He’s saying that about people who are actually crucifying Him.

Jeff: Sure.

Gary: And that the sin of those people would not be specifically held against them.

Jeff: Well I think it is contextualized.

Gary: Mm-hmm.

Jeff: But I also think that when you think about that, if our view of forgiveness is that when I forgive that a person is automatically forgiven, that’s not quite right. There has to be repentance and then the extension of forgiveness.

“Prayer” Pt 2

Gary: Yes.

Jeff: But what I think Jesus is expressing on the cross is a willingness to forgive. *“Father, forgive them.”* That is to say, if I can put it crassly, “forgive them upon repentance, upon the condition of repentance.”

Gary: Yes. But Jesus may be able actually to forgive them without repentance because He’s in this dependent position.

Jeff: Yes, but when the Lord grants forgiveness that’s when He forgives.

Gary: Yes.

Jeff: In Acts 5 it says, “May the Lord grant them forgiveness,” right?

Gary: Yes.

Jeff: So I would say that those men would have to be granted repentance in order to receive the forgiveness that’s extended to them.

John: I may be way off here, which is typical. But—

Jeff: I haven’t found that to be the case. But go ahead.

John: I don’t see this as “deliver us from evil men.” Paul says, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”* Those evil men are ensnared and captured and taken captive to do the will of the evil one. And our battle is not against any who are perpetrating this evil. And I think we would do well to inform our children of this prayer as well. We speak to the Most High, and there’s a war in heaven. And that war is taking place here on earth. And there is certainly evil, and we do evil. People do evil and they do evil to us. But we are those who have been *“rescued from the kingdom of darkness”* who are fleeing to a kingdom of light for strength and protection and deliverance. And the evil that we see is something to be saved from and protected from. But the person himself is not the ultimate evildoer. And I think that brings us in this prayer to pray: “Lord, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” because my battle isn’t so much with that person who is doing that evil against me as the evil forces that they are attaching to. It’s not that its wholly one or the other.

Jeff: That’s right.

John: It’s a bigger thing.

Jeff: Yeah. I would say to you to think about it like this. All that you read we can say are the forces of the antichrist—the powers and realms and so on. But when you think about that it comes down to this person has the spirit of the antichrist. And they’re deceiving, and so forth. And so my contact with all of this is in this right here, in this moment, the person who is deceiving.

So for instance he talks about this. You’ve heard a prophecy; you’ve heard a letter; you’ve heard a word purporting to be from me. Don’t believe it, right? And so there is all of this behind it. But this guy came and brought a letter; don’t believe that letter that he brought you. And he may be a manifestation of the antichrist. The point of contact is the evil one

John: I’m just trying to—

Jeff: No, that’s fantastic.

John: Because we are not in the place of judging that person in that sense of finality.

Jeff: Yes.

“Prayer” Pt 2

John: We certainly should reject that sin. But the only thing that’s going to overcome that evil is the cross.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: And the only thing that can overcome evil is that same cross.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. And the fact is that even with this person I’m to meet him in grace, right? And I may have to avoid them like Paul says. But even that avoidance is grace. Why is the church not coming around me, right? Hopefully even that avoidance becomes a message to those who function as deceivers, right? Matt, you have the last word and then we’ve got to go.

Matt: Okay. Just clarifying, I hear and agree with what you’re saying. So we recognize the people that we know are implementing the evil. I’m always reminded of the force behind it. So we need to pray for everybody, because we don’t know where they’re at and they could well be Christ’s. But at the same time (*unclear*) Satan has his purposes with evil men.

Jeff: Sure.

Matt: And I think of that phrase. What does it take for evil to prosper? For good men to do nothing. So I think what this does, in the mind of Christ specifically, “*deliver us from the evil one,*” and “*deliver us from evil men,*” it brings to me the attention that says that we’re in a war; we’re in a battle. And as men of God we need to stand up, whether it be in politics, in our homes, in our churches, or in our businesses. We need to represent Him. The kingdom of God is to overcome the kingdom of Satan. And we pray for them and love them so we can win them over. So I agree with what you’re saying. Jesus has called us to action.

And I’d like to rebut Don about kissing the Bible, because our director showed these kids getting Christmas presents and just how overjoyed they were. They were screaming and yelling and everything. And he showed another one where a bunch of Chinese brothers and sisters opened up a suitcase full of Bibles. And they reverently took them and they held them, and they kissed them to show that they treasured them. They treasured that Word. And to me that’s what we should be doing. So Don, it’s okay to kiss your Bible. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Okay. On that note, Don, I’ll let you ponder that. Let’s pray.

Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Lord, we ask that You will not only continually teach us to pray, but we ask that You will make us men of prayer. Our Lord, we’re going to fail at this. We’re going to be incomplete; we’re going to be irregular. And yet, Lord, let us be constant in our desire to be attentive to You in prayer and Your word, Lord. And we ask that You’ll make us men of Your word so that we can plead that Word back to You. Lord, we pray that You will shape us after Christ. And Lord, we ask it in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)