

FROM THE MINISTRY OF



THRU the BIBLE

LET US PRAY

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INTRODUCTION

My purpose in examining the so-called Lord's Prayer is not to enter the field of apologetics or logistics, but to strengthen the deep desire for reality in prayer in these days of superficiality.

The only excuse for studying the prayer is to lay upon the heart of God's people the urgency for knocking on His door, the necessity of asking, and the importunity for seeking. Nevertheless, in our zeal and enthusiasm we have stressed the importance of knocking at the right door, asking in the proper way, and seeking in the correct direction.

This message is sent out with the prayer that it may stimulate God's people to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

CHAPTER 1

IS THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR TODAY?

“The Lord’s Prayer” is likely the most well known in history—

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. –Matthew 6:9-13

But should this really be called “The Lord’s Prayer”? The confusion in title is well illustrated by a conversation between two men boasting of their respective knowledge of the Bible. The first man commented to his friend, “Why, you do not even know the Lord’s Prayer.” The friend stated that he certainly did and began to pray, “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” When he concluded, the challenger said, “Well, you sure fooled me. I didn’t think you knew it.”

For the want of accurate information, much the same confusion surrounds our use of the title, “The Lord’s Prayer.” Technically speaking, John 17 is the Lord’s Prayer—the prayer He actually prayed Himself. Jesus could never have prayed the prayer recorded in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 that, to us, has always been known as “The Lord’s Prayer.”

There are many instances which show clearly that this could not have been our Lord’s own prayer. For instance, He could not have used the first word “our.” His relationship to God is different from ours. We call Him Father because of regeneration; Jesus called Him Father because of His place in the Godhead. He was always careful to use the terms “My Father” and “your Father,” never “our Father.” Also, Luke records, “forgive us our sins” (Luke 11:4). The Lord Jesus had no sins to confess. As far as we know, He never took an offering into the temple for Himself—He was the sinless One who could ask, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46).

Therefore, strictly speaking, this is “The Disciples’ Prayer.” But with this differentiation drawn, and for the sake of ease of writing, we will use the accustomed title, “The Lord’s Prayer.”

The charge is often made against those of us who are conservative and premillennial that we slight the Lord’s Prayer, do not reverence it, or that we ignore it altogether. A further charge is made that we strike it out of our Bibles and consequently never use it in our public services at all. This charge is obviously untrue. I believe the Lord’s Prayer has a real message for us, and I trust that studying it will give us a new appreciation and reverence for prayer.

I have a notion the Lord’s Prayer is often used simply because it is something with which to begin a service. Those with elaborate rituals and extended liturgy always include this prayer, and it’s sometimes used by the most unlikely groups at the most inopportune times. For instance, during the opening of the World’s Congress of Religion at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, representatives of all religions of the world—including Buddhists, Hindus, and Taoists—all stood and in unison repeated the Lord’s Prayer!

This prayer was given as a model to the disciples in response to their request for Jesus to teach them how to pray. Every born-again child of God longs to have fellowship with God. Beloved, prayer is the mark of a regenerated person who has come to know God! You may remember that when Ananias of Damascus was sent over to see Saul of Tarsus he was told, “*You’ll know him—he’ll be the one praying*” (see Acts 9:11).

Two important characteristics stand out in the Lord’s Prayer. First is its simplicity and then its brevity. Simplicity and brevity ought always to characterize genuine prayer.

Looking more closely into its structure, we find two major divisions in this prayer. There is that which deals with the glory of God: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And then there is the division that deals with the wants of men: “Give us this day our daily bread.” We’ll look closer at these petitions in a later chapter.

Although it was given by our Lord as a model of prayer, this prayer is never repeated in the Book of Acts. As far as we know, the apostolic church never used the Lord’s Prayer. As a matter of rich spiritual exercise, you’ll find it profitable to compare this prayer to Paul’s prayers in the Epistle to the Ephesians. I think you will find that Paul moved to a higher spiritual realm in his praying.

There is something else to note: The Lord’s Prayer is included in the Sermon on the Mount. Every person who comes to the Sermon on the Mount ought to do so in a very thoughtful manner, for we have two extreme positions today. There are those (usually liberals) who say, “The Sermon on the Mount is all the religion I need.” A graduate of a seminary in New York City once told me, “All I need today is the Sermon on the Mount. You can take the rest of the Bible and destroy it so far as I am concerned.” Unfortunately, there are a great many people who feel that way. Then there is another group that feels this prayer has no meaning for us at all today and may as well be taken out of the Bible.

This whole difficulty arises largely because of a misunderstanding of the *interpretation* versus the *application* of Scripture—two vastly different things between which we must draw a sharp distinction. The Sermon on the Mount may not have an interpretation for us, but we can find great riches in its application.

To make clear this point, turn to the Book of Joshua and read, “Arise, go over this Jordan...” (Joshua 1:2). Now, how many of us have ever been over the Jordan River? If you haven’t, you’ve failed to keep that part of Scripture, for it very clearly states—and there is no misunderstanding so literal a statement—“Arise, go over this Jordan.” But you and I know this was written for another people and another day. So we understand it has an interpretation specifically for Joshua and the children of Israel relative to crossing the Jordan River into the promised land. But, beloved, it also has a very wonderful application for us. We can take it today as a commandment for our own hearts and souls. We are to understand that the River Jordan is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wants us as believers to leave the wilderness and its manna and cross over onto resurrection ground. For “if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). We are to cross over the Jordan into the promised land—the place of blessing.

So, you see, there was an interpretation for the children of Israel, but there is also an application for all believers. When there is an interpretation that is not directly for you and me, there is always an application that extends to us.

Now the Sermon on the Mount was given to people who were under the Law; they were certainly not under grace. It was a manifesto of the King, the law of the kingdom. But the church, which is under grace, will be the bride of Christ—she will reign with Him someday, and it has been the custom of a queen never to despise the law of the kingdom. The queen must still measure up to the laws of the kingdom.

Today, too many people declare themselves as conservative in their theology, and therefore a part of the body of Christ, yet live lives that despise the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, the law of the kingdom. What a sad commentary on the cause we represent! If those same people would go to the top of the mountain, the scene of the Sermon on the Mount, and listen to the King, they could not look lightly upon sin. We have such low standards, and we need desperately to get back to some good, old-fashioned virtues of common honesty and integrity. If you and I are to reign with Him, dare we despise these things?

When we stand in the revealing light of the Sermon on the Mount, how great is the need to reverence it. It is not a cover for sin—it condemns us. It is not a savior, for there is no mention of salvation, faith, or grace. It is a judge that looks at us as sinners and causes us to flee to the Savior for refuge. Law is justice, not mercy. When, in sorrow, I consider where I stand under the justice of that law, I can turn with rejoicing to the mercy of His grace, for it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5).

Let’s not despise the law of our King who will one day prevail on this earth; rather, let’s look at the gem nestled in the very heart of this great Sermon on the Mount. Seen in its proper perspective, the Lord’s Prayer will have a new meaning for you. It is a guide to prayer; we ought to reverence it and stand in awe and wonder before it. We dare not repeat it carelessly in a church service, for the time may appear when the praying of it will become the cry of our hearts.

But is the Lord’s Prayer for today? I think the key to the answer is in the Gospel of Luke. There he writes that the disciples went to the Lord Jesus and said, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). So He gave them this model prayer. Then He gave them a parable that, in my judgment, holds the placement of the Lord’s Prayer for us in this day. This parable is about a man who, having unexpected guests arrive during the night, knocked on the door

A person wearing a blue beanie and a grey hoodie is sitting on a large, light-colored rock in the foreground, looking out over a vast, rugged mountain landscape. In the middle ground, there is a dark, calm lake. The background features rolling mountains under a sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is serene and contemplative.

HE IS THE
omnipresent God.
BUT AT THE SAME TIME
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TO HELP US AS WE
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of his neighbor and asked that he loan him a loaf of bread to feed his guests. The neighbor replied that the family was asleep, and he did not wish to have the household disturbed, so the man would have to wait until the morning. But the man continued knocking until the neighbor got out of bed and let him have the bread, not because of feelings of friendship but because of the importunity of the person knocking (see Luke 11:5-8).

In taking this parable as the key, we must remember that Luke gives us parables by contrast. The point, simply stated, is this: Do you think God slumbers? He does not: “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4). Do you feel like you have to bang on the door to get Him to hear you? He is ready to hear and answer the prayers of those who come to Him. But He also says that, like this man, you are to go persistently and knock on the door:

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. –Luke 11:9

If you can pray the Lord’s Prayer like that man standing at the door of his neighbor at midnight—knocking to gain something in the time of emergency—then I say to you, use the Lord’s Prayer. But do not make it a vain repetition. It was given to avoid vain repetition. When it becomes the cry of the human heart, then that person can say, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” knowing that God does not slumber and that He wants to hear and answer prayer. Have you prayed like that to God recently? Have you gone to Him persistently, knocking at midnight?

Ask ... seek ... knock, and it will be opened to you!

CHAPTER 2

ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH GOD

Those great in both scholarship and humble faith have sat before the Lord's Prayer, intent upon finding the underlying richness of its perfection. Resultant of their research and study, some have determined that the Lord's Prayer falls into six petitions; others feel there are eight; while the opinions of the great Augustine and Martin Luther agreed there are seven petitions. This point we will not debate. However, I think there are three petitions relating to God and identified by the little pronoun *Your*—"Hallowed be Your name," "Your kingdom come," and "Your will be done." And then there are four petitions relating to man and marked out by the words *our* and *us*—"Give us this day our daily bread," "forgive us our debts," "do not lead us into temptation," and "deliver us from the evil one."

Although this breaking down of the Lord's Prayer is essential to our understanding, we will turn from it and concern ourselves, for the present, with the introduction or invocation of the prayer. Three striking statements lie here in the introduction: "Our Father," "in heaven," and "hallowed be Your name."

OUR FATHER...

The opening statement, “our Father,” was startling to the Old Testament saint, for as far as we know he never, under any conditions, called God “Father” in a personal way. It is true that Israel, as a nation, was called a son. God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh Israel was His son and to let him go. That is repeated again in Deuteronomy. But you do not find individual Israelites calling God “Father.” He was the Father of the nation, of His people, but the individual was the son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So they did not approach God as a father.

Note carefully that Moses was called a servant; following the thread, we see that David also was called a servant; and still following the development of relationship, we come to the Ethiopian eunuch and find that he becomes a *son* of God. How? Through faith in Jesus Christ! You can see something radical has taken place.

In a very real sense, all of mankind are the sons of God by creation. Paul, when speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill, said, “For we are also His offspring” (Acts 17:28). But the word he used is not that of sonship—*huios* in the Greek—rather, *genos*, which carries the meaning that we are His creation. God created Adam who was called a son of God. Then Adam sinned, and after the fall he begat a son who was like him in his fallen nature. From then on, mankind was no longer considered sons of God in any personal way whatsoever.

I say this kindly, but one of the most pernicious lies abroad in our land is that of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. There has never been spawned in the depths of hell a thing more deceiving. A great scholar of the past called them “a moronic simplification.” (Reduced to simple English, anyone who speaks of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man speaks as a moron.)

I am confident the Word of God provides sharp proof of the fallacy of this teaching.

Not too many years ago there was a case in Ohio of a one-year-old boy being kidnapped from his parents. Five years later a little lad was located in an orphanage who looked as they felt their son would look at that age. They concluded that their long quest was ended and ordered a blood test to determine if the boy was their long-lost child. But, sadly, he was not, and the newspapers carried the headline: “Science Shatters Dream.” Likewise, Scripture shatters the dream of those who long to establish the teaching of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. There is a blood test that must be made, and we are only declared to be sons of God through a washing by the blood of Christ. It is that blood which establishes our sonship with God the Father.

Often we find ourselves turning to that great field of music, the spiritual, for the gospel in homespun. Certainly there is one spiritual that needs to be sung in this day—it is “Everybody Talkin’ ‘Bout Heaven Ain’t Goin’ There.” Not everyone becomes a son of God today. Just because we are members of the human family does not grant us the position whereby we can say, “Our Father.” As the young couple had to turn away from the little lad at the orphanage, so God has to turn His back on a person who does not come the blood route—the way He has outlined. I know these are days of slipshod thinking, when sentiment passes current for the gospel, but God has fixed just one way.

We are living in a day of beauty parlor religion. We settle for bubble bath salvation instead of being plunged beneath the crimson flow that washes white as snow. We have mouthwash conversions instead of becoming new creations in Christ Jesus. We wear toothpaste smiles on our faces instead of the joy of the Lord in our hearts. We talk more about halo shampoo than about the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We give talcum powder testimonies rather than those saturated with the fragrance of Christ. We live

rosewater lives rather than lives manifesting the life of the Rose of Sharon. There is lipstick redemption instead of the precious blood of Christ. Synthetic jewelry is being worn instead of adorning the gospel of grace. And the glamour of Hollywood is being substituted for the glory of the holiness of God.

We must rise above the sham and understand the fact that everyone is not a son of God. We can become His son in only one way. Think of it: Even Nicodemus—a Pharisee with a God-given religion, a moral man, a man under Judaism who stood head and shoulders above everyone else—could not call God “Father.” The Lord Jesus said to him, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And in his Gospel, John says:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right [authority is the actual meaning of the word] ***to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*** –John 1:12

My friend, is this first statement, “our Father,” your precious possession for use in prayer? Can you rightfully use it before the Throne? Is He your Father through faith in Jesus Christ?

...IN HEAVEN...

One of my many moments of being spiritually thrilled is upon examining the second statement, “in heaven.” But to be correctly translated it should read, “in the heavens,” because it’s plural, not singular. While it was the custom in the New Testament to use the plural for the word “heaven,” it was not always the rule. When you drop down to Matthew 6:10 it reads, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and here it is in the singular and means the heaven of heavens where God’s throne is. But in the second statement, the word is in the plural: “in the heavens.” How wonderful that is!

And why is this so wonderful? There are three heavens mentioned in Scripture. The first is identified by the Lord Himself when He spoke of the birds of the heavens—the air spaces. These

are the first heaven. Then we read in Scripture of the stars of heaven—the stellar spaces that make up the second heaven. And finally, out in the vastness of His space somewhere is the throne of God—the third heaven. Paul spoke of being caught up into the third heaven. So, then, this prayer tells us that He is “our Father in the heavens”—the first heaven, the second heaven, and the very throne of God itself. That thrills us! It is the answer to man’s wisdom today. I trust that some of the wonder and glory of this is beginning to break in upon your heart.

Greek philosophy projected several theories, one of which was atheism. This was based upon the premise that there is no God back of this universe. This prayer tells us that back of this universe there *is* a God, and He is “our Father in the heavens.” Back of creation there stands a personality: GOD!

Several years ago, an astronomer speaking before an Astronomer’s Association in London called attention to a mass of new findings that revealed an ever-expanding universe. Then he commented, “In comparison to this universe—astronomically speaking—what is man?” A very scholarly, godly member of the body arose and said, “Sir, man is the astronomer.” Man, living here on this earth, has looked out into space and, somehow, come to a workable understanding of it. But the Great Architect and Creator, “our Father in the heavens,” looks down upon man in his feeble attempt to understand the creation by some physical means.

Then there is the pernicious philosophy of pantheism abroad today. It goes by several names, but it is a philosophy holding that creation is the sum total of God—that there is no God other than the combined forces and laws manifested in the existing universe. Therefore, its followers worship the sea, the moon, the sun, and every other material thing in nature. To them, God is matter—the sum total of everything. But this prayer says, “Our Father in the heavens.” He is not a prisoner in this universe. He is beyond and above it. He is in the air spaces, in the stellar



BY OUR LIVES
WE ARE TO MAKE GOD'S NAME

Holy

- DR. J. VERNON MCCREE

spaces, but He is far removed from His universe today—He is more than creation! He is the One sitting upon the throne of the universe, and He has it under His control.

Still another philosophy appears, known as deism. This system teaches that while God created this universe, He just wound it up as you do a clock and then went off and left it to take care of itself. Yes, it is true He is beyond space upon the throne of the universe. Proverbs says God is far from the wicked, and David, being mindful of this, was continually in prayer, “O Lord, do not be far from me” (Psalm 35:22). But Scripture also tells us He is “a very present help” in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1). How glorious it is that the Creator of the universe came to this earth and in His redeeming work went to the cross, rose from the dead, and is today at God’s right hand. But listen as He says, “...Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20) and “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). For where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there (see Matthew 18:20). He is the omnipresent God, but at the same time He is ever-present to help us as we face life with its problems and burdens.

...HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

Let us turn to the last great statement made in the introduction of the prayer: “Hallowed be Your name.” More correctly translated, it should read, “Let Your name be made holy.” The name of God stands for all that God is. When the Lord was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness, He sent His Angel and told them, “*I want you to obey Him; do what He tells you because My name is in Him*” (see Exodus 23:21). Who is this Angel? Undoubtedly, it’s “the Angel of the LORD.” (Other Scriptures shed light on the answer; see also Joshua 5:13-15 and 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9-10.) It is the Lord Jesus whom they were to obey. He is definitely the one in view here. That means all that God is—all that God stands for—is in His name.

The name of God was so reverent, so sacred to the children of Israel, they dared not even pronounce it. Today, there is such a familiarity with the name of God, even in conservative circles, that ought not to be. We've become too familiar with things that are sacred and holy, and we need to be very careful in this. Certainly, it's tragic when someone out on the street takes God's name in vain, but more tragic is the blasphemy of the sanctuary. I continually remind myself of this. We who walk into the pulpit do so with such frequency that we become familiar with it. We brush against holy and sacred things so constantly that they can become commonplace. And you who come to the pew—you do well to be reverent in His presence in the house that has been dedicated to Him. God, deliver us from treating as commonplace the things that are sacred before You!

How can we make God's name holy? Can we add to that which is already infinitely holy? Certainly not. Then what did our Lord mean by the statement, "Hallowed be Your name"? He meant that by our lives we are to make God's name holy.

We meet two men in Genesis: One was a disgrace to the name of God, and the other commended the name of God. These two men had one characteristic in common—they always built an altar where they chose to dwell. When Abraham went into Canaan, a Canaanite passing by observed that they had a new neighbor for he had seen his altar. Everywhere Abraham went, he built an altar to God. And Abraham began to do business with the Canaanites, who found him to be honest. Everything Abraham said invited their confidence. Finally, they reached the conclusion that the God whom Abraham worshiped was a holy God, and surely the name of God was made holy in Canaan because of the life of Abraham.

But when Jacob started out, he could not be trusted. Do not attempt to explain away the first part of his life, for it held only dishonor. Two things always marked the path over which he had gone: He had built an altar and he had defrauded someone. One day God met him as he was en route—he was alone, and God

led him down by the brook Jabbok. God told Jacob he could not continue conducting himself in that manner, for God's name must be made holy. And God caused the socket of Jacob's leg to be dislocated. I believe God will do that today for anyone of His children who is bringing dishonor to His name.

Paul said to his people in that day, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you..." (Romans 2:24). My friend, let us go to the top of yonder mountain where He gave the Sermon on the Mount—we need to go there. We must have men and women who name the name of God and whose lives correspond to it!

I commented to a friend of mine, "If I ever leave the ministry—and there are times when I am tempted to do it—it will not be due to a loss of faith in the Book." There was a time when I had doubts about the Bible, but today I do not have a single doubt; I am willing to stake the eternal destiny of my soul upon the accuracy of the Bible. I believe it with all my heart. If I ever leave the ministry, it will be because of leaders who profess to know the name of God but blaspheme that name in their living. Go to the top of the mountain and listen as He reveals His will.

We are not saved by the Sermon on the Mount, but you and I can make His name holy by reading it and abiding therein. I know it is a ministry of condemnation, but it will cause us to flee to Jesus for refuge, for salvation, deliverance, and power; and we will become God's child by faith in Jesus Christ that we might be enabled to make His name holy in our living. Are you hallowing God's name in your daily life?

CHAPTER 3

GOD'S COMING KINGDOM
ON THE EARTH

Born out of the Golden Age of the Victorian era, the twentieth century launched in high hopes and aspirations. Optimism was the dominant note of the hour. Man was going forth in that day as a knight clad in shining armor. “Onward and upward forever” was the catch phrase of the new day. Surely just around the comer was the millennial kingdom—coming to pass *ipso facto*—for man had willed it and made the world a glorious place.

The church, quick to catch the spirit of the age and permeated with this leaven of false hope, spoke bravely of converting the world. In 1901 someone wrote this interesting bit of daydreaming on the Lord’s Prayer:

The Prayer, thus taught us, gives faith and hope that His kingdom is coming. The sun’s dawning rays on the mountain tops are the assurance that the perfect day will come. The best things in individuals and in nations, increasing each decade, are proof of their final prevalence!

The Student Volunteer Movement of 1912 also had as its motto: “The World for Christ in this Generation.” In later years, a minister identified with this movement told me, “It is hard for me today to realize that at that time we actually believed the world would be won for Christ within the next few years.”

There was a great missionary emphasis in the early part of the twentieth century. Africa, China, and Japan were open fully to the gospel, and inroads were made for the cause of Christ everywhere throughout the world. About that same time, a Peace Conference was held at The Hague in Holland. At this conference men wore little ploughshares made out of swords upon the lapels of their coats. “There will never be another war,” they said. “There will be a warless world—we are coming into a new day.”

It is difficult for us today to relate to the thinking of men in that day. Postmillennialism was in the saddle, and riding mankind was a push towards “building the kingdom.” In fact, the church was made synonymous with the kingdom in that day. But frankly, any suggestion of the coming of Jesus Christ would have been a source of great embarrassment, as His coming would only have interfered with the accomplishments of men, holding up the glorious program they had for self-improvement of the race. Men who were premillennial and did speak of the coming of Christ were looked down upon and considered strange. In his introduction to Dr. W. E. Blackstone’s little book, “Jesus is Coming,” Dr. Torrey stated how difficult it was to preach the precious hope in days when popular opinion agreed that the sweeping successes of man would surely bring in the kingdom.

But a great change has come. In the race today, all the way from statesman down to the humblest ranks, people are disappointed, discouraged, distraught, and disillusioned. What has happened since the dawn of the twentieth century? An inventory includes wars the likes of which the world had never seen. A worldwide depression swept over us, and today a godless ideology threatens Christianity. Science is no longer the savior of the race but the

destroyer. In the world of the spiritual, postmillennialism is as dead as a dodo bird. You will not find on the topside of the earth today a reputable theologian who is postmillennial. Now that does not mean they have become premillennial—they have not. They have become amillennial. They have given up the idea of the Millennium altogether because they have come to the conclusion that they are not getting the contract from God to build the kingdom of heaven here upon this earth.

YOUR KINGDOM COME...

An idealistic character in Robert Browning's poem, "Pippa Passes," sings forth the spirit of the nineteenth century:

The year's at the spring
 And day's at the morn;
 Morning's at seven;
 The hillside's dew-pearled,
 The lark's on the wing;
 The snail's on the thorn:
 God's in his heaven
 All's right with the world!

But in our present day, I fear we shall have to turn to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for a summary of our age of confusion. It is there that we find the line, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

There is something definitely wrong in this world in which we live. In spite of that, however, men still talk bravely about building the kingdom. But, my friend, they are conducting a bankruptcy sale on a new world order and a fire sale on a new social order. I am of the same opinion as Dr. George Guille who said that it seems as if the church is in the business of making the world a better place for men to go to hell in. Yes, the church was engaged, and feverishly so, in its program for making the world religious when it suddenly became infatuated with an idea that greatly expanded its program—namely, that the church could and would bring the kingdom of God here on this earth.

A person wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a grey beanie stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. Their arms are outstretched horizontally to the sides. In the background, there is a line of trees and a bright, hazy sky. The top of the image features a large, semi-circular, textured brown shape that contains the first two paragraphs of text.

GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS
grant OUR REQUESTS,
BUT HE DOES NOT WANT
OUR *souls* TO BE LEAN.

GOD IS PROVIDING US
a spiritual bread.

- DR. J. VERNON MCCREE

This term “kingdom” causes more confusion than any other term in Scripture. What meaning is wrapped up in that word? I do not want to appear too dogmatic where good men differ, but there are certain basic principles we can state. And I would like the liberty of making this personal observation. For years I thought the Old Testament and the Epistles were difficult since they contained doctrine. But I thought the Gospels were simple and, in a measure, quite easy to comprehend. May I say to you that I have arrived at the conclusion that the Old Testament and the Epistles are simple, while the most difficult portion of the Word of God is the Gospels. It is in the Gospels that we find the theme song, “The Kingdom.”

If I can make clear to you something of what this kingdom means, it will help you more than any other one thing to get a correct perspective of the Word of God and of life. Basically, mention of the kingdom lies in the Old Testament. When John the Baptist appeared with the Lord Jesus Christ, they began with the message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Now, neither the Lord Jesus nor John explained it or attempted to define it. This argues that the people to whom they were speaking understood what they meant. It is that kingdom which, at first, had been vouchsafed to David, of which God said to him, “I’ll bring One to sit on your throne, I’ll bring the Messiah, and He will reign in righteousness and justice and peace on this earth” (see 2 Samuel 7:12-17).

The prophets took up this song and sang it in the dark hours of the night. A day was coming when Jerusalem would become the very center of this earth—the capital city, if you please. It was the bright ray of hope in the darkest hour of these people. They sang that the entire earth would be ruled over by this One who was to come. Even nature would be affected. The desert would blossom as the rose. The sun, moon, and stars would be affected. Just as the events that took place in Bethlehem made it outshine all the other thousands of cities of Judah, so is this little planet of ours made the jewel of the great universe of God—for here is where the glory of God was to break!

May I say, this kingdom is a progressive and growing thing. Isaiah said:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. –Isaiah 9:7

My own point of view—and like many McGee theories, it may not be too good—is that this kingdom will increase and grow throughout eternity. That is going to be one of the glories of it. There will be nothing static or sterile about this kingdom at all; it will be characterized by constant growth. And I think it is defined in our petition, “Your kingdom come.”

YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” What does the Lord Jesus mean as He gives this petition? Is it that the will of God, which is all prevailing in heaven, shall ultimately prevail here on this earth? Yes, His glory will shine forth on this earth! It is God’s intention that His will shall someday prevail here where rebellion has broken out and man lives in sin and unbelief. May I give you just one verse out of many found in the Old Testament:

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. –Daniel 2:44

That is the kingdom toward which God is moving.

While this kingdom is not altogether spiritual, it has a spiritual aspect. Some will say, “Yes, but you know the Bible says the kingdom of God is not meat or drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Let me illustrate my point: The Preamble to the Constitution of these United States says we are given freedom for the pursuit of happiness. It does not guarantee

happiness, but it guarantees the right to pursue it in liberty. Now happiness, while an abstract term, is spiritual and is to be sought by us while we are in a physical world of mountains, rivers, seacoasts, deserts, plains, and valleys. With this in mind, let us go back to the thought of the kingdom.

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. –Romans 14:17

That righteousness is to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and it is a peace that *only* He, who is the Prince of Peace, can bring to this earth.

This brings us to the all-important question: Is the church part of this kingdom? The Lord Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world...” (John 18:36). Someone will reply, “Now you see, it does not pertain to down here.” Yes, but He said the same thing concerning believers—that they are *IN* this world but not *OF* it. His kingdom is to be in this world, but it is not to be established by the world’s methods. It is not moved forward by the politics of this world. His kingdom will contain no Republican or Democratic platform. It will be established and maintained on a different basis from that of our world.

Again we ask the question: Is the church part of this kingdom? Some of my good brethren say the answer is no. So I want to be very careful at this point. When you say the church is not the kingdom, I think you are accurate; but when you say the church is not *part* of the kingdom, then I think you are wrong. May I illustrate: California is part of the United States, but California is not the United States. Nor is the church the kingdom; it is merely *part* of the kingdom. And how does she become a part of the kingdom? Well, she will be the bride of the King of that kingdom.

Therefore, let us consider again the laws under which the bride must live in that new kingdom. They are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. The church—the bride to be—is now under grace, living under new principles by the Holy Spirit. But

that does not mean she can flout the Sermon on the Mount and despise it. Come, my fundamental friend, my premillennial brother, and let us, as members of that church, go once again up to the top of that mountain where He gave the Sermon. Let us look into His face. We need to, you know. This is His law. I know we are not under law, but—at the same time—we do not despise law. He values honor and integrity. Faithfulness and righteousness are things He counts as valuable. And, my friend, purity still counts in the high court of heaven. We have come to the place in fundamental circles where we close our eyes to these things we need to recognize.

But the kingdom mentioned in Scripture—the one we pray about—is coming in glory. It is that glorious kingdom that shall be established someday on this earth—His millennial kingdom. The kingdom in creation, the whole creation, is groaning and travailing, waiting for the day. Even we ourselves are awaiting that day, for “it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him...” (1 John 3:2). The King will be revealed, His glory will be extended on this earth, and righteousness and peace will cover this earth as the waters cover the sea.

Our prayer looks even beyond the millennial kingdom. “Your kingdom come.” Whose kingdom? “Our Father in heaven, *Your* kingdom come”—that eternal kingdom mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 where we are given an order and a development of the kingdom. Let us notice it briefly:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. –1 Corinthians 15:20

He is back from the dead, and after Him those that are His are going to arise. He is merely the firstfruits. Then we read:

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. –1 Corinthians 15:24

Does that mean the millennial kingdom is coming to an end? Oh, no, it is an everlasting kingdom. What shall be happening is revealed in the following:

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. –1 Corinthians 15:28

After the Lord Jesus reigns on this earth for one thousand years, after Satan is put down eternally, after the lost have been judged, He returns to His place in the Godhead that God may be all in all. But He will continue to reign, and this earth will continue to be the kingdom and the place of blessing. This is the day of His rejection, when men turn their backs on Him. His glory is not manifested today, but it is a time when you and I can bow to His scepter. Everything is sweeping toward that kingdom.

Do you have a passion for His kingdom? Are you looking forward to His coming in glory? It is that kingdom spoken of in Revelation 21 and 22—a kingdom in which there will be no tears, no death, no sorrow, no pain, and no fear. I ask you, are you looking forward to it? Today you and I can say, “Your will be done on earth” if our hopes and longings are bound up in this blessed thought.

Now the church is in the very heart of His program as He is sweeping events toward that glorious kingdom. Are you moving forward with Him? I think God’s great men of the past moved with Him. When John Knox said, “Give me Scotland or I die,” he was praying, I think, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When the Puritans came to this country and established a place where they could worship God and propagate the gospel of Christ, they were saying, in fact, if not in word, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And there are times when you and I arise to that high level and say from our hearts, when a passion is there, that His will might prevail here on this earth.

I believe this part of the Lord's Prayer—"Your kingdom come"—is corporate. It speaks of the global purpose of God in this world. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" has, I believe, a personal angle. When we say it, we are pledging allegiance to Him. This makes it difficult for a sleek, sophisticated congregation to repeat it in a very glib way on Sunday morning.

Paul was a son of God, and he exalted that truth. He gloried in the fact that by regeneration he had come into the place of sonship. "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ..." (Romans 1:1), he wrote of himself. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ! Yes, I also am a son of God, but I must bow to His scepter if I want His will done in my life. I am His prisoner. Christ is King, and He wears the crown and holds the scepter. He is the greatest of dictators. He wants your body, your heart, your mind, your soul—He wants *you*. In these days of His rejection, have you bowed to Him? If not, do not dare say, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's Word yields a beautiful incident, the knowledge of which brings a demand for decision on our part. The story lies in the days of David's rejection. David was God's anointed king, but Saul was pressing him so hard that he had to leave the throne, Jerusalem, and even his kingdom. He went across the Jordan River and camped there. David had on guard one of his own men to watch at the banks of the Jordan, though the river was at flood stage. Suddenly the guard ran to David with the message, "There are men swimming the Jordan over toward us." David went down to the water's edge and said to the strangers, "If you come peaceably, your heart will be knit to me. But if you come to do me harm, I will do you harm." And these men lifted their voices as best they could while swimming against the current and said, "Oh, David, we want to join you." When they got to the other side, exhausted from swimming against the current, they fell down before David. And Amasai said, "We are yours, O David; we are on your side, O son of Jesse!" (See 1 Chronicles 12:15-18.)

A scenic mountain landscape with a wooden cross in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the mountains in the background are rugged and partially covered in snow. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and whites, with a slightly desaturated, vintage aesthetic. The text is overlaid on the sky and mountains.

ONLY GOD COULD
give a book like the Bible;

ONLY GOD COULD
send a person like Jesus.

- DR. J. VERNON MCCOEE

This is the day of Christ's rejection. If you want to bow to Him, you must swim against the currents of this world. If you are going to yield to Him today, you will go contrary to everything in which this world is interested. But it is worth it, because He is moving toward a kingdom. Someday He shall reign here. What a privilege it is to bow to Him now. Are you among the number swimming against the current that you may cross to be on the Lord's side?

CHAPTER 4

GIVE US THIS DAY
OUR DAILY BREAD

The average well groomed, well-fed Christian congregation of the day will find it very difficult to seriously repeat the petition, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Someone has defined the average church service in America today as a service in which a mild-mannered man gets up before a group of mild-mannered people and urges them to be more mild-mannered. What a sad commentary on the church, if that be true.

But it is very difficult for Americans, who go out to great supermarkets and push baskets through a maze of shelves groaning with all kinds of foodstuffs, to ask God for bread. God just does not seem to be in the colossal business of mass merchandising today. Why make fervent prayer to God for bread in this day of the welfare state, when we are looking to government instead of looking to God? This is a time when we are trying to detour around God in order to get our bread. We have come to a time when statism is a menace. Rome, with her program of bread

and circuses, provided for the population, which should be a danger signal before us in our day. What can follow in the wake of such a program but immorality and decay?

In America at this hour, there is plenty, even a surplus today. Over one-half of the world's population went to bed last night with their hunger pangs not fully satisfied. Famine stalks this world today in many parts—the third horseman of the Apocalypse is riding, even now, across the land. We are living on an earth that has the curse of sin upon it. From the day that Adam sinned, God said to him:

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread... –Genesis 3:19

And from that day until the present hour, men have found no magic process of producing bread other than by hard work.

We may have it easy now, but may I say there is a day coming when men in this country will be able to pray this prayer with a great deal of anxiety, of seeking, asking, and knocking—“Give us this day our daily bread.”

This petition is so simple, yet it should come from our hearts with great enthusiasm. It speaks of our utter dependence upon God. Our bodily wants, our physical necessities, all come from Him, and He supplies them day by day. Israel gathered manna for the day and nothing for the morrow. They were not permitted to gather manna for the next week. This prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” gathers manna every day. It shows man that he lives from hand to mouth and that even his bodily necessities, his basic needs, come from God.

Someone has said that bread is the staff of life, and how true that is. Let us consider man for just a moment and see why bread is so essential to him. As we know, physically man is made of dust. He was taken out of the dust. We forget that, but the psalmist says:

For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

–Psalm 103:14

Oh, how often you and I forget we are dust and, in our pride, forget our humble origin. There is a saying that “when dust gets stuck on itself, it’s mud,” and to such nothingness pride brings us. In the body of every man and woman are the same chemical elements found in the soil. And real wheat bread and real cornbread have in them more of the elements than any other food we eat today. When we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are asking God for those basic needs of our physical bodies, and it should teach us to depend upon God and rest upon Him. May I say that I do not think a Christian should be alarmed because of what the economist says about diminishing resources. We are not looking to man to supply our needs; we are looking to God. We must learn to acknowledge God in all the affairs of our lives. A little poem we teach our children expresses this well:

*Said the robin to the sparrow,
 “I should really like to know
 Why these anxious human beings
 Rush about and worry so!”
 Said the sparrow to the robin,
 “Friend, I think that it must be
 That they have no Heavenly Father
 Such as cares for you and me!”*

You and I need to remember what He has told us in His Word: When we put Him first, all these other things—these necessities—will be added unto us (see Matthew 6:33).

There is another thing in this simple petition, “Give us this day our daily bread.” God is the giver of everything. You will not find His cost on the loaf of bread you buy—He is on the giving side. As you look at the loaf of bread on your table, be thankful for the fact the bread has come ultimately from the hand of God.

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour; and back of the flour, the mill; and back of the mill is the wheat and the shower, the sun, and the Father’s will.

Back of that loaf of bread is our generous Father, and we can say to Him, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Now I believe the Lord’s Prayer will not reach its full fruition until the Millennium comes. But someone will ask the question, “How can they pray this petition during the Millennium with the curse removed from the earth and an abundance here?” I’ll tell you how they can pray it, because in that day the One who fed the multitudes with the loaves and fishes will feed His own. The prophet Isaiah says in that day “He will feed His flock like a shepherd...” (Isaiah 40:11) and in that day men will pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

But this prayer has for you and me a higher meaning than the physical. For the Christian it has a spiritual as well as a physical meaning. It is more than food, for “man shall not live by bread alone” (Deuteronomy 8:3). Man has been created for something greater than that, though this little poem does portray some folk in this world:

Into this world to eat and sleep
 And know no reason why he was born
 Save only to consume the corn,
 Devour the cattle, flock and fish,
 And leave behind an empty dish.

That is about all some folk do, just satisfy their physical needs and live like animals. But no child of God is here to live in that fashion. We are called to something higher than that, and the food that is spoken of here is spiritual food. This has a spiritual meaning for Christians, for they have not been promised physical blessings alone. Physical blessings are secondary to the Christian today. But if you have them, then thank God, remembering they are extras. David said:

I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.

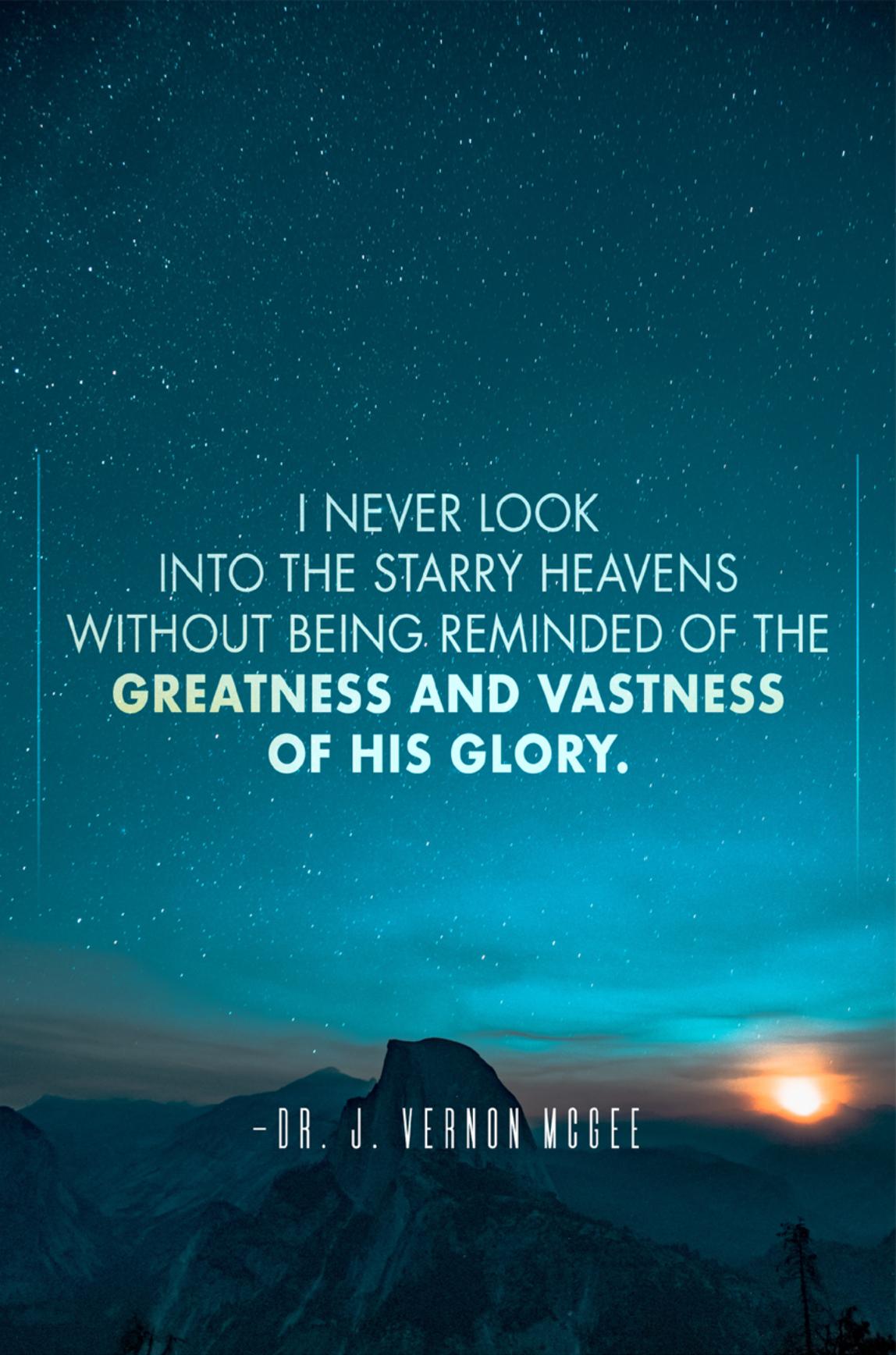
–Psalm 37:25

But I guarantee you, there are believers today “begging bread.” Beloved, may I say to you, God has not promised us physical blessings. He has promised us *spiritual* blessings. Material blessings were promised and given to the nation Israel, but spiritual blessings have been promised to the church. If you want another distinction between Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament, then remember: Physical blessings in the Old Testament; spiritual blessings in the New Testament.

When Paul the apostle was converted, he was not given a book recommending all of the choice places in which to eat in the Roman Empire. When Paul lists the things he suffered, he says, “We both hunger and thirst...” (1 Corinthians 4:11). He knew what it was to hunger. And God’s children down through the ages have known what it is to actually go without food. They have known hunger for physical food. The full story has never been told of the thousands who starved to death in Europe during World War II—many of them Christians. There were endless numbers of Christian families, where the father and mother bowed their heads in the mornings and would say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and then they would see their little ones waste away. Finally, death would come to the little ones, and the parents would look at this petition and wonder at its meaning.

My friend, as a Christian, you must explain to people what this petition means. To tell them that it means physical bread would be all wrong. God did not say we would not suffer in this age, but He did say He would provide spiritual bread today for those who want it and who know their need of it. The psalmist tells us when Israel complained to God and wanted meat to eat, God gave them quails. “And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). Today God does not always grant our requests, but He does not want our souls to be lean. God is providing us a spiritual bread, for He says,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. –Matthew 5:6



I NEVER LOOK
INTO THE STARRY HEAVENS
WITHOUT BEING REMINDED OF THE
GREATNESS AND VASTNESS
OF HIS GLORY.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

Do you have a hunger and thirst that the world cannot satisfy? Do you thirst after righteousness? I point you to the One who said:

I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. –John 6:35

Do you know what it is to have your spiritual thirst slaked? Do you know what it is to have that deep down hunger in your heart satisfied by coming to the One who is the bread of life? Oh, today, may our prayer be, “Give us this day our daily bread.” May our hearts go out to Him, for He says:

If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. –John 7:37

There is a verse in the Psalms that has meant a great deal to me, and I want to pass it on to you. It is in Psalm 104, which opens with “Bless the LORD, O my soul!” And verse 15 reads as follows:

And wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man’s heart.

This is not bread for the stomach, oil just for the physical face, and wine of the world. Rather, it is the joy of the Lord, the fullness of the Spirit, and the bread—the Lord Jesus—that satisfy the heart of man.

Is He all of this today in your heart and life?

CHAPTER 5

FORGIVENESS, TEMPTATION, AND DELIVERANCE

In an earlier chapter I stated that the Lord's Prayer falls into seven petitions: three pertaining to God and known as the theocentric petitions, and four that are manward and are known as the anthropocentric petitions. The latter group—those having to do with the foundational and fundamental things in our lives—deal with that ugly thing called sin. Charles Spurgeon said no prayer of mortal man could be complete without a confession of sin, and this part of the Lord's Prayer faces up to this business of sin, the reality of it, and how to deal with it. One of the things that marks us today is that we will not face up to reality. Not only is it true of the isms, but it is true of many individually. We want to deal with things that are theoretical—not with things that are actual. But this prayer is real and actual.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS,
AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

I want you to note these three wordings: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” is Matthew’s account of it. If you turn to Luke 11:4 you will find that it is, “And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” It was Tyndale in his translation who introduced the word *trespass*, and you will find in some churches today where there is formal religion, liturgy, and ritual, the use of “forgive us our debts,” while others will use “forgive us our trespasses.” Two little girls were talking about the Lord’s Prayer as repeated in their churches. One said, “We have trespasses in our church,” and the other said, “Well, in our church we have debts,” and they were both probably right as far as the churches of our day are concerned—they have both debts and trespasses.

Which one is accurate? There is no difficulty here at all since all of these words refer to the same thing: Sin. In Scripture there are many words for sin. Sin is a complicated and mysterious thing. Goodness and virtue are simple. One of the attractive things about sin is that it is like a maze or a puzzle; it is something that you do not know too much about. Let us turn to an illustration for this thought. If I were to hold a straight stick behind my back and asked ten people to draw a picture of it, I have a notion that they all would draw just about the same kind of picture—it would be straight. Now that represents goodness—it is always just one way, and it cannot be two ways. But if I held a crooked stick behind me and asked ten more people to draw a picture of it, there would be as many different pictures of that crooked stick as persons drawing it. That represents sin. Sin can be crooked in a million different ways; Scripture, therefore, uses many different words for it.

It would be of interest to look at some of those words. It is called *debt* because it is a debt to God. It is called *missing the mark* because we fall short of the glory of God. It is called *lawlessness*,

disobedience, trespass, crossing the boundary, or a moral aberration. Then there are such terms as *impiety, blasphemy,* and *disharmony,* meaning that which is out of harmony with God. These are some of the words used to set forth sin in all of its complexity today. But they all may be crystallized into one meaning in the use of the word “debt”—something that we owe. There are sins of omission as well as sins of commission. We say we have done what we should not have done, but we have left undone those things that we should have done. And today you and I are in debt to God. We owe Him something, and we have not paid that obligation; we have not discharged our responsibility.

“And forgive us our debts [our sins], as we forgive our debtors [those who are indebted to us].” This is on a legalistic basis and, frankly, I am rather afraid to pray the prayer just like that. A Puritan theologian remarked that to pray this with an unforgiving spirit means in actuality to say, “God, do not forgive me because I do not forgive those who are around me.” How many people there are today of whom that would be true! They have an unforgiving spirit, and yet they have the audacity to say to God, “Forgive me as I forgive those around me.”

If God forgave us as we forgive those around us, I fear few of us would ever be forgiven. For in the heart of man there is an unforgiving spirit. David committed a grave sin, and God said to him, “*You are to be punished, David. But I will let you choose your punishment. Would you prefer to fall into the hands of God or into the hands of your enemy?*” It did not take David long to arrive at a conclusion in that matter, for he cried out to God, “Oh, let me fall into the hands of God, for He is merciful, and let me not fall into the hands of man.” (See 2 Samuel 24:10-14.)

I am grateful I do not have to stand before my enemies in judgment. I often receive many kind and gracious letters in response to my ministry, but every now and then I receive a harsh and critical letter—and how distressing it is. It is difficult to see how it could have come from the heart of a Christian.

When I read a letter like that, I am glad I do not have to stand before that person in judgment, for I would not stand a chance. Perhaps they ought to be thankful they will not have to stand before me, because they might not get off so easy, either. You see, we would not be very gracious to each other. We are not even gracious to ourselves. We sometimes hear the expression, "I wanted to kick myself." God has no such attitude toward you. He is gracious, and David said, "*Let me fall into the hands of God—He is merciful—and let me not fall into the hands of my enemies.*" That is grace. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is not grace—it is legalistic.

I thank God for another verse of Scripture:

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. –Ephesians 4:32

Today God forgives us on the basis of what Christ has done for us, not on the basis by which we forgive. The redemption of God is in full view when God forgives us. It does not refer to our salvation when we read, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He is speaking there to those who are already saved and have the nature of God. He does not wait for you to forgive before He forgives; that is not His method of settling the sin question. He gave His Son to die, and it is on that basis that God forgives and saves.

Do you know it is more difficult for God to forgive sin than it is for you or me to forgive infringements? I can make this clear with a homely illustration. If you should step on my shoe and spoil my shine and then say to me, "I am sorry, will you forgive me?" I would say, "Sure. I was going to have another shine anyhow. Forget it." But it is a vastly different matter when we watch a judge who is trying a criminal. He should not let that criminal go free just because he expresses sorrow for his act. The judge is in the position of being a ruler and is obligated to uphold the law. So it would be more difficult for the judge to forgive than for me to forgive you for having spoiled my shine as you stepped on my shoe.

God is the moral ruler of this universe in which you and I live, and when He forgives He cannot do it by just letting down the bars and taking us into the back door of heaven. But to return to our illustration: Suppose the criminal was condemned to death, and we decided to call upon the governor of the state to forestall any efforts to delay the carrying out of the sentence. If this criminal met us at the door of the governor's mansion, we would be startled and naturally ask him: "What in the world are you doing here?" Should he reply, "Haven't you heard? The governor has pardoned me and brought me as a guest to his home!" then we would know some conniving had taken place somewhere. If God would forgive you in like manner, then He would be compromising with sin and admitting criminals into heaven. God cannot do that. Do not think that God forgives on some little sentimental basis, that somehow He shuts His eyes to the sin question. The teaching that God forgives sin without doing anything about it is liberalism at its very core. Yes, God forgives sin, but He has to do something about it.

Again, let us return to our illustration. Suppose, if upon meeting this criminal at the governor's door, he should say to you, "Haven't you heard? The governor's son has paid the penalty for my sin, and the governor is going to adopt me as his own—he is going to give me the rights of citizenship, take this fallen nature out of me, and make me a law-abiding citizen." Would you approve that? Well, that is exactly what God has done about the sin question. God forgives only on one basis: His Son came into this world, went to the cross, and paid the full penalty for your sin and my sin. Today we have forgiveness with Him because He paid the debt and set us free. That is the only basis of forgiveness. In the death of Christ upon the cross, our sins have been removed "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12)—He has put them where He remembers them no more.

There is a mercy seat today for the sinner. The Lord Jesus gave a parable of the Pharisee and tax collector who went up to the temple to pray. The poor tax collector stood afar off, beat upon



— Just as this universe reveals
the vastness of God, —
so a little flower reveals
something of the
beauty of God. —

— DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

his chest, and said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). What he actually said was, “Lord, be mercy seated to me.” The mercy seat in the temple of God was beyond the tax collector, and he was denied access to it. As far as he was concerned, there was no forgiveness for him at all. Therefore, he cried out to God in his desperation, saying, “Oh, Lord, if there were only a mercy seat where a poor tax collector could go for salvation.” Today, there is a mercy seat for everyone—it is the blood of Christ. That is made the throne of judgment, the throne of grace, and we can come before Him boldly and find help.

This petition of the Lord’s Prayer is for those who have been born again and have the nature of God. It is for their life and service, so it is pertinent and practical. May I say to you that an unforgiving spirit has put more Christians out of service than anything else. Along the shoreline of Christian work there is wreck after wreck of those who were at one time in Christian service and are out today for one reason: They have an unforgiving spirit.

John says in his first Epistle:

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. –1 John 2:9-12

Remember this one thing: God has forgiven us through the blood of His Son. But on the basis of our forgiveness of one another is our service and walk conditioned. It is on that basis that we worship God. The Lord Jesus says if you go to the altar and remember that your brother has anything against you, do not even go on with your worship, as important as that is, but leave it and go and be reconciled to your brother (see Matthew 5:23, 24).

That is of paramount importance. And how many times our Lord repeats this! Over in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul says it in just a little different way:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. –Colossians 3:12, 13

Many people who claim to be fundamental in their faith are nursing little grudges; they are holding a hatred in their heart against a brother and having an unforgiving spirit. You know, Paul and Barnabas disagreed. Barnabas, the “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36), was not much encouragement to Paul when they disagreed over John Mark and were separated. But Paul was wrong about John Mark, and at the end of his ministry he apologized. Paul said, “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). What a wonderful spirit Paul had.

I have in my possession a very personal letter to Dr. R. A. Torrey written by Dr. Frank De Witt Talmadge. This letter comes out of a day when men were giants on this earth. I came into possession of this letter while a pastor in Pasadena, California, at a church that had the desk and filing cabinet of Dr. Torrey. One day when I reached into his filing cabinet, I found an envelope containing a letter dated January 2, 1900. It is from this that I give the following excerpt: “Dear Dr. Torrey: Today I’m standing under the shadow of two griefs. First, that of Mr. Moody’s death; secondly, the fear that I may have done you a very great injustice.” At this point he outlined what it was and then concluded—“If there is any way that I can rectify the wrong, I’ll gladly do so.” Then he told how he was willing to do it, and it was a way very humbling to him. Then he closed with this: “May the sweet spirit of him who is gone make me more and more preach the Gospel of love.

Yours, with sorrow, Frank DeWitt Talmadge.” These men were giants, and they were big because they knew how to forgive. It is something all of us need today.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Do we forgive so God might harness us for service—that He might bless us richly? Great men, such as Paul, have a forgiving spirit. Those men, when wrong, acknowledge when they are wrong. One listens almost in vain today to hear some minister or Christian worker acknowledge that he is wrong. We are living in a day when no one is wrong and no one apologizes. How the church needs men and women who will humble themselves and ask forgiveness when they have wounded a brother or sister.

AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION...

Now let us look at the next petition: “And do not lead us into temptation.” This word “lead” gives us the wrong impression, because James says God does not tempt any man (see James 1:13). A better translation here would be, “Do not leave us in temptation.” It does not mean to keep us out of it, but when we are in it, do not leave us there.

In a church in the South some years ago, the preacher called on the membership to stand and give a favorite verse. One deacon got up and said his favorite verse in the Scripture was, “It came to pass.” Everyone looked puzzled. Finally the preacher said, “Now look here, brother, what do you mean?” He answered, “I’ll tell you. When I get into trouble, or I get into temptation, I always turn to that verse in the Bible where it says, ‘it came to pass’ and I say, ‘Hallelujah! It came to pass—it didn’t come to stay—and God will deliver me out of it.’”

My friend, that may be misusing Scripture, but he was absolutely accurate. That is exactly what the Scripture says: “...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations...” (2 Peter 2:9). And again:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

-1 Corinthians 10:13

If you have ever noticed a freight train as it was passing, you saw that each boxcar has on it, “net weight.” That means each boxcar has a certain capacity, and they never let it get overloaded. God knows what your capacity is—He knows how much weight you can carry—and He will not let you be tempted above what you are able to handle.

...BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE

Finally, “But deliver us from the evil one.” Satan is an awful reality. The world laughed at Martin Luther who threw an inkwell at him. But recently we have had a turn in events. One of the greatest brains of the world was C. S. Lewis, and in his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, he took apart the liberal who denies the reality of Satan. Any man who stands for God knows the awful reality of Satan. As we work in any sort of Christian service, we become conscious of the presence of God and also dreadfully conscious of the presence of Satan. But we have this petition: “But deliver us from the evil one.”

The reason most of us fall today is because we are in the wrong place. We are like the little boy sitting in the pantry and looking at the cookie jar. His mother calls out, “Willie, where are you?”

He says, “I’m in the pantry.”

“What are you doing in there?” she asks.

He replies, “I’m fighting temptation.” That is the distance most people choose in fighting temptation today! If a fast train passes through a station, those who aren’t paying attention and are too close to the tracks run the risk of being sucked by the air current

into the path of the train. That is the reason some of us fall—we have gotten too close. “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

This is a prayer that comes down to us where we rub shoulders with men. It is a prayer that ascends to God from the child of God. There is forgiveness for us today; there is deliverance from temptation and from the evil one.

These are three words to look at very closely: forgiveness, temptation, and deliverance. There is forgiveness with God. The world is hard, cruel, unforgiving, and that spirit has crept into the church, but God can forgive and does forgive on the basis of the blood of Christ. He can make you and me triumphant over our temptations. And He is able to deliver us through the merit, strength, and power of Jesus Christ when you and I take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and pray in the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 6

FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY

We are now going to look at something that is included in the Lord's Prayer, but which probably should be excluded. You see, the words, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" are actually not in the Lord's Prayer. The Revised Standard Version (which, by the way, I do not recommend as a substitute for the Authorized—but it is helpful in several places and is a useful reference book for any well-grounded Bible student) gives the prayer as follows:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. —Matthew 6:9-13, RSV

It stops there and does not go any further. The statement, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" is not included. Now the question naturally arises, why is it that

To glorify God
is our **primary business** as
professing Christians.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

A close-up photograph of a human hand reaching upwards, palm facing up, against a bright blue sky with soft, wispy white clouds. The hand is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the skin and the veins on the hand.

this petition is not included? The reason is that the King James Version was translated from the best manuscripts in existence at the time. Since then, better manuscripts have been discovered, and we find this petition omitted from these better manuscripts.

Now immediately someone is going to ask, “But how does this fit into the theory of plenary verbal inspiration?” And by plenary verbal inspiration we mean that the words of the Bible are inspired. As I see it, that is the only logical explanation of inspiration. Either this is the Word of God or it is not the Word of God. Either it is reliable or it is not reliable. It is not the thoughts that are inspired; it is the words that are inspired. Thoughts can be misunderstood, words cannot.

There is a story of a young lady who had been studying voice, and the time came for her to give her recital. In her dressing room after the concert, she asked about the reaction of her very famous teacher to her performance. A friend, with difficulty, finally brought forth the statement, “He said you sang heavenly.” The young lady, quite thrilled, asked if those were his exact words. The friend said, “Well, those were not his exact words, but that is what he meant.” The young singer, still not satisfied, demanded his exact words, which were, “That was an unearthly noise.” You see, it is the *words* of Scripture, and not the thoughts, that are important.

We believe in plenary verbal inspiration, but we also believe it applies only to the original documents, most of which have since been lost. But we also believe the manuscripts we have today are reliable and can be trusted. Many of the manuscripts found have been brought together and all tell the same story. There are some discrepancies, to be sure, but none of these pertain to any of the important doctrines of Scripture.

Let us look at the matter of inspiration a little further. There is a striking similarity between the written Word and the living Word, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Both are human and divine. The Lord Jesus Christ is both of God and man. One of the oldest creeds of the church states it accurately: “Very man of very man,

and very God of very God.” Therefore, you would expect to find the Word of God made flesh growing weary on a dusty road in Samaria and sitting down to rest. You expect to find Him shedding tears of sorrow at the tomb of Lazarus. Neither is it surprising to hear Him claim to be the Messiah as He talked with the woman of Samaria; nor is it strange to hear Him command Lazarus to come forth from the tomb. He was both God and man.

The Bible is a God-book and it is a man-book. The Word of God has become incarnate in the alphabet of man. The Word of God becomes a book with a binding, printed with printer’s ink, and made into words that men can understand. Men transcribed it by hand even before Gutenberg printed it. It has been translated from one language into another. Scribes have made errors in transcribing the text, and printers have made typographical errors. The limitations imposed upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a man are likewise imposed upon the Bible.

As a human book, it requires a knowledge of the language in which it is studied to comprehend its meaning. There is no magic method by which to memorize the fine passages of Scripture. It requires real study as it does to gain a knowledge of any subject—geography, history, literature, or philosophy. The lazy and careless student cannot come at its meaning by any superstitious method. Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” God has hidden rich treasures in His Word, but it requires a great deal of searching to discover them. Diamonds are not on the surface. The injunction is: “...Search the Scriptures...” (John 5:39), “be diligent to present yourself approved...” (2 Timothy 2:15), and “...give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13).

As a human book, the Bible was written by about forty-five human authors who expressed their thoughts, projected their personalities, and stated their ideas. Nevertheless, they were moved by the Holy Spirit, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy

Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The Greek word for move is *phero*, and it indicates a sailing vessel borne along by the wind. The Spirit of God worked in these men in a way to secure an inerrant Word of God. This is exactly the claim of Scripture:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. –2 Timothy 3:16

That word “inspiration” is the Greek *theopneustos*, meaning “God-breathed.” Nothing less than the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture will satisfy the language of Scripture and the need of man.

Although the human authors expressed the full feeling of their hearts and the complete thought of their minds, they nevertheless expressed the exact words of God to men. They were not pens with which the Spirit of God wrote. Any dictator can make men automatons to express the dictator’s thought and totally submerge the writer’s real intention. The supernatural element in Scripture is that God did not arbitrarily destroy the personality of the writers, but instead used them to express His complete, adequate, and inerrant will. The words are God’s. Having completed the canon of Scripture, God has no afterthought to submit as an addendum to the Bible. God perfectly expressed Himself through imperfect men. There is a dual authorship of the Bible that attests to the supernatural. Only God could give a book like the Bible; only God could send a person like Jesus. We have a God-book in our hands, and it does not yield merely to human intellect.

The ordinary avenues of knowledge are not sufficient to comprehend its meaning. We get most of our knowledge through the eye gate and the ear gate, but Scripture warns these are not adequate to give us divine understanding:

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. –1 Corinthians 2:9, 10

What the eye gate and ear gate cannot supply, the Spirit of God will compensate. He alone can take divine truths and apply them to our hearts. The facts of Scripture must be learned by human effort, but the spiritual truths must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. The natural man does not have sufficient spiritual IQ to understand the Bible.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. –1 Corinthians 2:14

REVELATION means God has communicated with man.

INSPIRATION guarantees the accuracy of that revelation.

PRESERVATION infers God maintains that revelation in the world.

ILLUMINATION insists only the Holy Spirit has
the interpretation for man.

TRANSLATION means the transference of the text of Scripture
from one language into another.

Now that we have examined the solidarity of the setting in which rests this gem—the Lord’s Prayer—let us look again at the phrase that has been omitted in these later translations. “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” It is a most scriptural statement, and for that reason I should like to have it remain as part of the Lord’s Prayer. After the people brought their wonderful offerings for the construction of the temple, David lifted his heart to God in prayer:

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. –1 Chronicles 29:11

While David elaborated a great deal, it is a prayer of rare beauty and is basically the same petition we are considering now.

It is worth noting that in Luke's record the Lord's Prayer breaks off at a different point from that given in the Matthew account. I have a notion the Lord broke off at a different place on each occasion of repeating the prayer. And the reason is obvious, for I feel He is attempting to teach something. Since the prayer as recorded in Luke 11:2-4 carries no "amen," it is thus open to added petitions. It was given to babes in Christ that they might know how to pray. It is the same as how we today teach our little folk to say, "Now I lay me down to sleep..." Before long they have added, "and bless Mommy and Daddy," and later, other petitions. I must confess that several times I have had to get up off my knees and tiptoe out of the room because of some of the things for which my little girl prayed. I know the Lord understood her prayers, but I have never discovered why she prays for the little boys and girls in China and then for the boys and girls in Michigan. I do not know why Michigan should be chosen out of the fifty states. These little ones just launch out into the deep, and in this lies our illustration of the absence of the "amen."

YOURS IS THE KINGDOM...

Now let us look at the three possessions of our God mentioned here. First is the kingdom. We have a great deal to say about the kingdom, and I make no apologies in going over some of this again, for repetition is a sound principle of pedagogy.

Let us remember that in this magnificent Old Testament prayer, David had in mind the kingdom God had promised to him—that from his line there would come the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, and He would sit upon the throne of David and rule on this earth. As David lifted his heart to God in prayer, he saw a kingdom lying in the future; he saw that kingdom as a mighty focal point with the great rays of Scripture

converging upon it. That is my reason for saying the church is in the kingdom and we are moving toward that day when the kingdom shall be established.

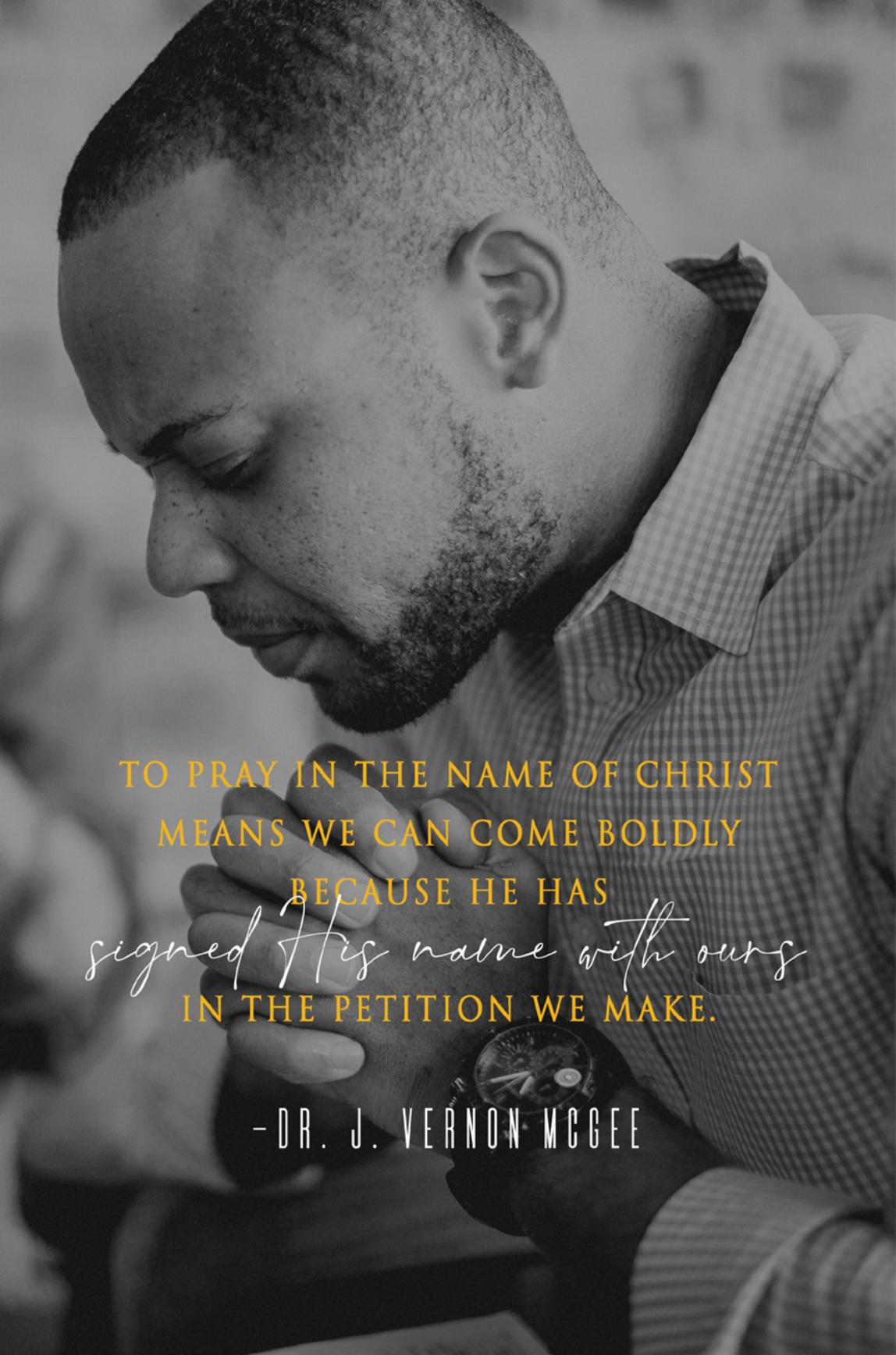
The Father said to the Son, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Psalm 110:1). After His rejection, Christ was brought to death through crucifixion, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended back to heaven, and took His place at God's right hand. And today He is bringing many sons home to glory. Thus He is moving world events toward the focal point when this kingdom shall be established upon the earth, He shall reign from shore to shore, righteousness shall cover this earth as the waters cover the sea, and righteousness and peace shall kiss each other.

We must remember that this kingdom will not come by human manipulation. It will not come by ecumenical movements or any man-made program. It will be established in one way, and that is by the catastrophic and cataclysmic coming of Christ to this earth to put down all unrighteousness and establish His kingdom here in power and glory. That is what you express when you say, "Yours is the kingdom."

...AND THE POWER...

But, my beloved, let us move on to the second possession: "the power." This is an age of power. It is an age of jet planes, rockets for outer space, and nuclear warheads. But in this age of power, when unheard of things are being accomplished in a material world, it has become the age of powerlessness for the church. As Samson was shorn of his hair, thus has the church been robbed of her power.

I'm reminded of Thomas Aquinas who entered the place where the Pope was counting the money. Thinking he had entered at a time when he should not have, he turned to walk away. But the Pope saw him and said, "Sir Thomas, no longer can the church



TO PRAY IN THE NAME OF CHRIST
MEANS WE CAN COME BOLDLY
BECAUSE HE HAS

signed His name with ours
IN THE PETITION WE MAKE.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” Without even turning to look back, Thomas Aquinas said, “That is right, your Holiness, but no longer can the church say to the impotent man, ‘Rise and walk.’”

This is an age of powerlessness, and yet—

[He is] ***declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*** –Romans 1:4

He also says,

All authority [power] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. –Matthew 28:18

And further,

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.... –Acts 1:8

How can these things be?

Let us look at the common logic of it. If the electric lights go out in Los Angeles, it does not mean that Hoover Dam has given way. It simply means that somewhere a connection has been broken. Now Christ has had all power given to Him, and if your church is powerless, then some of you had better be walking the line to see where the connection has been broken. Do you recall the incident of the man at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration? He had the little lad who was demon possessed, and he said, “So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him” (Matthew 17:16). How true that is of us today. It should cause us to bow our heads in prayer. Perhaps He cannot trust us with power today because we abuse or misuse it. But thank God He is coming, and He will use power to correct the evils of this world. It will take power to get rid of our political regimes. It will take power to put Christ on the throne. He is coming in power. His is the kingdom, the power!

...AND THE GLORY

What is glory? What is its shape, size, and color? Perhaps you feel you have never seen it, or you believe it is spiritual and therefore cannot be seen. Not so, my friend. It can be seen. Every Hebrew word translated as our English word “glory” means something physical. It has been a rich experience for me to go through these words in order to arrive at their real meaning. How my heart longs to see the glory! I trust that you will be interested to look at these words, also.

The first “glory” means “wide and great,” as in this verse: “The heavens declare the glory of God...” (Psalm 19:1). I never look into the starry heavens without being reminded of the greatness and vastness of His glory. Oh, the vastness of the universe! And did you know that it is expanding continually? Surely “the heavens declare the glory of God.”

Then there is another word associated with our word “glory,” and it means “brightness.” And there is a third word translated “beauty,” as in, “...Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matthew 6:29), referring to the lilies of the field. Just as this universe reveals the vastness of God, so a little flower reveals something of the beauty of God. The One who made the flowers loves beauty, and God is the One who made the flowers.

But the most common word in the Old Testament relative to the glory of God is the Hebrew word *kabod*, which means “wealth and worth; dignity and honor; splendor and majesty” and can apply either to God or man. Its primary meaning is that of the external or physical, but it also has an ethical and moral significance. When used, it speaks of the purity and holiness of God; it speaks of His essential character:

I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images. –Isaiah 42:8

Now this word “glory” as used in the Old Testament speaks of a material manifestation of God. Moses said to God on Mt. Sinai, “Lord, I want to see your face,” and God said, “I’ll let you see my glory” (see Exodus 33:20-23). Moses saw God’s glory on another occasion, too. When the tabernacle was completed, the glory of the Lord filled the place. And when Moses and Aaron moved out with the Israelites, the Shekinah presence of God was with them in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. It was a physical manifestation of God. You may recall that when Solomon built the temple, the glory was transferred from the tabernacle to the temple. But somewhere in their long, dreary, sinful history, the glory departed. Ezekiel saw the vision—it lifted up from the temple and abode a moment to see if the people would turn back to God. But they did not, so it withdrew out over the city. It paused again over the city walls to see if the people might turn to God, but they would not. Then it went on out to the Mount of Olives and was caught back into heaven. That was the last view of the Shekinah glory.

Then after 400 years of silence, shepherds on a hillside had a manifestation of the glory of God as the angel said, “Glory to God in the highest.” As John said:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [pitched His tent among us], ***and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*** –John 1:14

May I say that the word “glory” has an ethical value here, because in Christ it was not physically manifested, except on one or two occasions. What they saw was that He was innately holy, harmless, undefiled, the One separate from sinners. But when He was born, He laid aside His glory that He had with the Father in heaven. What identified God in the Old Testament no longer identified Him. In the New Testament, we find Him wrapped in the swaddling clothes of humanity and, in due time, grown to full manhood and the service of the ministry. He laid aside that physical manifestation as a garment. In writing of it, Paul says:

Who, being in the form of God [the *morphia* of God], ***did not consider it robbery to be equal with God*** [because it rightfully belonged to Him], ***but*** [laid it aside and] ***made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.***

–Philippians 2:6, 7

For over 2000 years, theologians have been arguing about what it was He laid aside. What was it that He emptied Himself of? I feel that He laid aside His glory and walked this earth as a man. Oh, He is God, but He laid aside His glory. Then there came that day when He walked with His disciples and “a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). It was not a rain cloud. It was the glory-cloud—the Shekinah glory. That which He had laid aside was waiting for Him, and thus He took, again, all the prerogatives that rightfully were His. He wore it as a garment and entered into heaven!

At this point of departure, He made a statement we will do well to meditate upon. In telling His disciples that He was coming again, He said,

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. –Matthew 24:30

Have you ever stopped to think what that sign is going to be? I am not sure that I know, but I would like to make a suggestion. Personally, I feel that when He is to come, the Shekinah glory will flash as the lightning from the east to the west. Thus Shekinah glory will again be revealed upon the earth.

There is no glory today—it is withheld. Today you and I are to glorify Him. He said:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. –Matthew 5:16

And Paul said:

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. –1 Corinthians 10:31

That is the chief business of a Christian. Some will say soul-winning is the Christian's chief end. No, that is secondary. To glorify God is our primary business as professing Christians. Scripture has a word for us here:

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

–2 Corinthians 2:14, 15

You and I are to glorify God regardless of results. We are to glorify Him and bring nothing of disrepute on His name or cause that will drive men and women from His presence. Someday we will spend an eternity glorifying Him. If you do not enjoy glorifying Him here, I do not think you will enjoy heaven very much. In all fairness, how can you—after thinking quietly upon the undeserved love and goodness of God poured out upon you—fail to want to kneel before Him thankfully in adoration?

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

CHAPTER 7

THE GRAND OMISSION

When you see a freight train standing on the track with a caboose coupled on, you know it is ready to take to the road—it is complete. A freight train with other cars added after the caboose would look irregular. And should you see a freight train without a caboose, the instant impression would be that something else is to be added. With this simple illustration before us, consider the matter of the Lord Jesus breaking off the Lord’s Prayer at different points and under different conditions without using the word “amen.”

The fact that He omitted the “amen” in the instance recorded in Luke 11 means something else was to be added. But what right have we to add anything to the Lord’s Prayer? We can add only Scripture to the Lord’s Prayer, and we must have scriptural warrant for it. The question is, do we have scriptural warrant to do this? And if so, what is it we are to add? What is the grand omission creating this great void?

A landscape photograph featuring a vibrant rainbow arching across a cloudy sky. Below the rainbow, rolling hills are visible, with a small white farm building and a few trees on a hillside. The foreground is a green field with some sheep grazing. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

GOD HAS *never sent a blessing*
TO HIS PEOPLE *without* FIRST HAVING
them pray for that blessing.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

The Lord Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer to His disciples at the beginning of His ministry, and He repeated it intermittently. He must have said it many, many times. Then at the end of His ministry, He met with His disciples in the Upper Room where He instituted the Lord's Supper. Then He told them something new: He told them He was the vine and they were the branches. Then He gave them a new basis for prayer. What He said is vital, but it is passed over today:

And in that day [when He comes back from the dead, after His death and resurrection] ***you will ask Me nothing*** [that is, we are not to pray to Him]. ***Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.***
 –John 16:23, 24

Here is our scriptural warrant: We are told to add to the Lord's Prayer in the name of Christ. This is a new basis of prayer.

Back in the Old Testament, prayer was made for the glory of God based on the covenants of God. That is the reason you find so many times in the Old Testament people in their prayers to God speaking about the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. When we come to the New Testament and the Lord's Prayer, it is made for the glory of God. But something new has been added. The Lord Jesus says, in effect: *"Up to this point you have asked nothing in My name, but from now on ask in My name."* Beloved, the Lord's Prayer, as well as any prayer today, should be made in the name of Christ. In fact, there is a startling promise given here:

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. –John 14:13, 14

He not only said it once, He said it three times in the Upper Room. This is a startling promise, because it is limitless, it is without bounds: "If you ask anything in My name...."

But it is qualified, too, by “in My name”—that is, the name of Christ. In this day in which we are living, it is the only basis for prayer—the neglected act of worship. We are to remember that God hears only the prayer made in the name of Christ; there is no other basis. But that He has promised to hear prayer made on this basis, we may rest assured.

It is important to understand what it means to pray in the name of Christ. It is not a formula, a prescription, or a pet expression with which to conclude prayer. Nor is it an “open sesame,” a turning on of the spigot, or the writing of a letter to Santa Claus. Oh, no, it is not that at all. So what is the real meaning?

To pray in the name of Christ means, first of all, that the individual praying must himself be in Christ. There is a word that, over time, has come to mean more to me than any other word. It seems to increase in richness and value day by day. It is a little preposition, and you will probably be surprised to hear it. The most important word in the Bible to me is the little preposition “in”—*in* Christ. “In Christ” is another way of speaking of salvation. Dr. Norman B. Harrison said that identification is synonymous with salvation. How true that is. The most profound statement I find in the Word of God is: “...You in Me, and I in You” (John 14:20). Those are simple words—any six-year-old can tell you the meaning of each word—but, beloved, how profound they are when put together in this statement!

What does it mean that He is in us? Well, He took our place down here.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. –2 Corinthians 5:21

He was made sin for us—not in some academic manner, some forensic way, but He actually was made sin for us. And the moment that holy Lamb of God—who was in perfect fellowship with the Father, for He said, “And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32)—bore our sins upon the

cross, He was completely identified with us. He was “delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25). Today in Christ we have forgiveness of sins. Today God is saving men and women because Christ completely identified Himself with us, paying the penalty in full for your sin and mine.

Now I would like to say very reverently that God is not a shady character or a swindler. He has collected for your sin; the penalty was paid by Christ. God will save a sinner 100 percent because Christ was identified in us down here. But that is just one half of the story.

We are now identified in Him. He was “raised because of our justification,” but justification is not forgiveness of sin. So He was made sin for us “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” He paid the penalty of sin completely. Jesus has “paid it all, all to Him I owe.” That is my favorite hymn, and at my funeral I do not want them to sing “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” or “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere.” I want them to sing the positive hymn of salvation in which we can live gloriously and die triumphantly—“Jesus paid it all.... Sin had left a crimson stain—He washed it white as snow.” He paid it all, and now His robe of righteousness has been made over and given to those who do no more nor less than simply trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A book published years ago told a romantic and fictional tale of the robe worn by Christ at the time of His crucifixion. Actually, that robe had no romantic history. Probably some burly Roman soldier won the robe, it fit him too well, and with summer coming on in a very hot climate, he could not bear its heat and threw it into a corner. One day someone picked it up and threw it away. You say, “Oh, my, that is awful!” No, my friend, that robe has no romantic history because there was no merit in it at all. God saw to it that it disappeared.

But thank God there is another robe—the robe of His righteousness. And that robe does have a romantic history. Oh, how romantic it is! That robe is spotless and white, and He puts it over any and every sinner who will only trust Christ. No longer do we have our sins upon us, for Christ bore them. Now we are more than forgiven sinners; we stand in robes of righteousness in God’s presence, complete in Christ. Nothing is to be added, for nothing can make us more complete than we are in Jesus Christ—saved and brought into His presence, accepted on the basis of what He has done.

You may remember that Jacob, by his mother’s trickery, got hold of Esau’s garment, put it on, and deceived his blind father who thought Jacob was Esau because he was clothed in Esau’s garment. When I come into God’s presence, He accepts me as Christ not because I am deceiving Him, not because He cannot see me, but because it is the way God has arranged it. I am clothed in Christ’s robe of righteousness. I am accepted “in” Him, and now I can come in Christ and present my petitions to God. It means when I pray in the name of Christ, I can do so because I am in Christ. We must be children of God before we are ever on praying ground, “for the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).

The child of God should be admonished by the glorious things said in Hebrews:

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.... Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. —Hebrews 4:14, 16

To pray in the name of Christ means we can come boldly because He has signed His name with ours in the petition we make. In my first year of college, I did not have enough money to get through and wanted to borrow some. But I will be honest—I could not find

anyone who wanted to lend me any. Finally, a wonderful friend of mine said he would cosign a note with me. He put his name on that note, I took it to the bank, and I had no difficulty at all. They did not even look at my name, but they saw his name, accepted it, and let me have the money. In simple language, God will not hear your prayers because of who you are, and He will not hear your prayers because of your merit. He hears your prayers and my prayers only when they are made in the name of Christ. If Christ's name is on the petition, God hears and answers.

A second thing is important: When we pray in the name of Christ, the prayer must be in the will of God. That is, the person as well as the prayer must be in the will of God. Notice this carefully:

If you love Me, keep My commandments. –John 14:15

Keeping His commandments is to be in the will of God. He says:

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. –John 15:7

It is not only union with Christ, but it is communion with Him that gives a basis for God hearing and answering prayer.

Prayer is not a matter of attempting to get a reluctant deity to come over on our side; prayer is not a method resorted to as if to persuade God to do something He is loath to do. Think carefully—God is trying to persuade us! He wants to do something for us, and He is trying to get us into a position to receive it. Luke 18 records the Lord Jesus' parable of the unjust judge and the poor widow, and that is a parable by contrast. The poor widow went every day to that judge, and finally he heard her petition. The Lord Jesus says if that unjust judge would hear a poor widow who had no political influence, don't you know your Father in heaven, who is not unjust, will hear you? God is trying to get us into a place where He can bless us.

Our earnest prayer, as children of God, should be: “Lord, get us into a position where we can be blessed. Take out of our hearts those things that are blocking You from getting through in mighty power.” God *wants* to bless—need we try to persuade Him to do something He longs to do?

Your prayers and mine are not going to upset the program of God, for it is in God’s program that prayer shall have a place. God has never sent a blessing to His people without first having them pray for that blessing. I know in my own experience God has had me praying for things that were already on the way, and He does that many times today. Daniel prayed that the people might go out of captivity even though he already had God’s word they were to leave in 70 years. Daniel prayed because it was God’s will. There are many ways of escape in the minds of people today, but God has only one method, and that is prayer.

I want to conclude with a very homely illustration. Suppose there is a man who wants to master the violin. So he finds a station on his radio that is playing the music of Bach. He sits in front of the speaker and attempts to play along on his violin, but he is not experienced enough and is not able to keep up. He makes mistake after mistake and, growing weary of his efforts, begins to play “Turkey in the Straw”—a tune he knows well—instead. This in no way affects the artistry of the music being played over the radio. The next evening, the man tunes in again and this time they are broadcasting a piece by Wagner. Once again, he attempts to follow along on his violin. But once more it ends in failure, and he resorts to the cowboy music with which he is familiar. Again, this does not at all interrupt the perfection and beauty of the concert over the radio. But this man, longing to play, hears that Handel’s “Messiah” is going to be given the following week. So he spends the days and evenings practicing the score. And when at last the strains of the “Messiah” come from the radio, the man is ready to join in under the director and go along in harmony.

Beloved, that is what it means to pray in the name of Christ. It means to get in tune with heaven. It does not mean God must rearrange His program for us, but that He will work mightily upon us if we get our little instrument in tune so that whatsoever we ask, He will do.

Regardless of the prayer you pray, whether it be the Lord's Prayer or another, there is a grand omission unless it is made in the name of Christ. And it cannot be made in the name of Christ until *you* are *in* Christ, fully trusting Him, and you are in the will of God.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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