

OpenTheo

Prayer as the Christian Priority



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of prayer as a Christian priority. He acknowledges that it can be easy to become discouraged when praying repeatedly with seemingly no results, but reminds listeners that God knows our needs and wants us to ask Him for help. Gregg also notes that prayer is not just a means to fulfill personal wants or needs, but a way for Christians to participate in God's work in the world. He encourages listeners to pray with pure motives and in partnership with God, trusting in His wisdom and goodness.

Transcript

Chris asked if I would speak on the subject of the priority of prayer. Of course, I'm glad to do so. It's a very urgent subject, as he said.

You know, he said, there seems to be too little prayer, and I think he diagnosed it right. We're not in desperate circumstances, like many people are. When I first went to speak for Youth with a Mission in Korea, this was back in the 80s, the Korean Christians, all of them, used to get up at four in the morning and walk down the street singing songs to prayer mountains all over Seoul, and they would spend two to four hours in prayer.

That was just the normal Christian life for the Koreans. Of course, they had North Korea menacing them every single day, tunnels being discovered, North Koreans trying to break in. The sermons at the churches were often about the dangers, the dangers of North Koreans.

These people had a sense of urgency about prayer that made it very natural for them to do it. I think you'll find, probably, that it is much more natural to pray hard and pray frequently when you know you're in trouble. I think that if the church in America does not know that it's in trouble yet, then I don't think you're awake.

You might be woke, but being woke is the opposite of being awake. obviously and so you know I think we need to become aware of what's going on in our time this is a time of great spiritual deception and calling for people who know how to pray so the priority of prayer is what Chris wanted me to talk about I'm going to break this into two parts I'm

going to talk about why it's a priority to prayer and to pray and then why which is the question on everybody's mind why are some prayers not being answered I mean everybody has prayed and found their prayers not to be answered although if you've been a Christian very long I'm fairly sure that you've prayed and found prayers to be answered God does answer prayer but he doesn't always seem to do it immediately or sometimes he just vetoes you know what you're asking and there are reasons for that which we probably need to consider let's begin with and I wish you would if you have a Bible if you look at the scriptures with me because I have quite a few of them and it's it's to your advantage to read along if you can now everybody has it on their phone all right everyone has a scripture on the phone I would strongly recommend that if you go to a church where the Bible is taught if you can find one of those somewhere that you bring a real Bible a real hard copy of the Bible with you you can see so much more of the context and so forth than just looking up the scripture that the preacher calls out on the on your phone or something but nowadays it's getting very easy just to carry a small device and use it for everything including Bible reading but frankly with a small screen I bet you're probably not going to do a great deal of Bible reading probably going to just kind of look at the verse that the pastor uses the beginning of the sermon if he still does so but if you have a Bible you can kind of see the context I'll tell you I've learned so much sitting under Bible teachers in my past with a Bible open and they're talking about a passage and I'm seeing all around it and getting I'm getting what they're saying I'm getting so much more to I just I don't think we should become people embarrassed to be seen with the Bible you know no one's embarrassed to be seen with a phone but some people might be embarrassed to be seen with a Bible and frankly carrying a Bible is one of the let's just say less risky ways of taking making your faith visible to other people but I don't think you should carry a big Bible just to look like you're a Christian you should carry a Bible because you read it because when you have time waiting at the doctor's office you read it that's what I did waiting for a bus if anyone takes buses I mean wherever you are when someone's standing you up and you're waiting for them to show up late you've got your Bible there of course you have that on your phone too but how many really look at that you know I I always try to have a Bible with me although even when I don't carry one I do have my Bible with me but and it's not on my phone but if you get it in your head then you don't necessarily have to carry it in your hand but it's still valuable to do unless you have completely memorized which I do not the verse I'd like you look at if you happen to have your Bible with you is Luke chapter 18 verse 1 later on tonight we're going to come back to the verses that follow this verse but it's a it's a telling verse it by itself it's the introduction to a parable and it's this is not the words of Jesus this is the words of Luke describing and setting up parable in Luke 18 1 it says then Jesus spoke a parable to them that men are always to pray and not lose heart now it's not very often that the Gospels in recording parables of Jesus taught tell you right at the beginning here's what it's about you know a lot of times you read the parable you're still not sure what it's about sometimes Jesus gives an explanation and then you know somewhat more what it's about but this is a very a good opportunity for us to read

a parable that we know before we're going in what Jesus was giving out and it must be that Luke felt this is important enough that he didn't want anyone to miss it because you can read the parables of Jesus and if you're not not everyone understands them immediately but Luke says okay here's going to be a parable and here's the lesson that people should not faint that's what the King James says that men are always to pray and not to faint I actually like that translation I grew up with that one but what faint means is to lose heart to lose you know hope and to just give up okay so we are always to pray and not to lose heart now why would we ever lose heart well part of the reason is because we sometimes have prayed for things that seem quite important to us and we would think important to God too and nothing happened or nothing visibly happened and we're accustomed to getting results with the things we do we're very pragmatic if something doesn't work you know that you know the saying you know what insanity is it's doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result that's true of most things but when it comes to prayer if you're praying and not getting a result that doesn't mean you shouldn't keep praying it's not insanity there are times when prayer doesn't immediately produce effects and where God is you know basically building patience testing our faith things like that there's reasons God has for that but the point is that we're not accustomed to continuing in any activity that doesn't yield results within a short period of time we're instant people we want everything as instantly as possible and if something we're doing doesn't seem to be getting anything done well we look for something else to do to get that done and so we have to heave this warning that men ought always to pray and not to lose heart we do lose heart when we pray again and again and again for the same thing and it does not appear that anything happens we think oh why bother this isn't getting anywhere this is true especially if you're praying for perhaps friends who are unsaved family members they're unsaved boy you really have to keep doing that for years sometimes I will give you this little tidbit George Mueller who is one of the greatest prayers probably in modern history had a list he kept of us of his unbelieving friends and there were I think hundreds of them on the list but he would pray for them and he prayed for them every day and he prayed he prayed for some of them he said for over 50 years without seeing them converted though some were getting converted there were still some of them that were holdouts and by the time he died everybody on his list had become a Christian except two there were two who had not yet but he'd been praying for her every day for 50 years and one of them got saved the day after he died and the other one I think got saved within the next year after 50 years of being prayed for so you know you don't always see the results even in your lifetime doesn't mean that nothing is happening or that nothing will happen so CH Spurgeon I think is the one who said if you want to embarrass a Christian man ask him about his prayer life does anyone you know resonate with that I mean Christians pray but most Christians are saying yeah I think it's supposed to be more than what I'm doing you know I think I think prayer is supposed to be better than this better than my example of it and I'd have to say the same thing I mean I pray too but I have to say when I read about even Luther whose my mind was not not an extremely spiritual man but but

he used to say I've got so much to do every day I can't possibly do it without spending two hours of prayer for you know every day Wesley starter Methodist he not only himself but all the ministers he trained said they need to pray four hours every day they had to get up at eight or four every morning pray till eight I mean I've tried that I guess I probably need to get that earlier if I got to try that and you can figure out why I say that but there's a man named E.M. Bounds a famous Methodist writer he's written book after book after book on prayer and he just spent six hours a day in prayer he was a he lived during the Civil War and he's from that era but I think he was a chaplain now he might not have a chaplain but he was involved in the war some way as a minister anyway when I read about people who pray for two hours a day four hours a day six hours a day I start to think well is that a waste of time I think not we sometimes don't pray as we should because it feels like it's a waste of time we don't we would not dare say that we feel like it's a waste of time because prayer is very a very sacred Christian duty and the Bible talks about it encourages it and to say I think it's a waste of time would be a very sacrilegious thing say so we would never say that but we might think that because there's so much to do you know okay maybe I'll give 15 minutes maybe a half hour if I can if I can think of enough things to say for a half hour maybe I'll give that much time to prayer but then you know you're about to do it and you realize oh there's so many things I got to do I need to go check my email you know I need to I need to go and you know check and see if the sprinklers are working or something you know there's anything almost anything can preempt it because when I go out and do something then when I've done it something has gotten done but when I pray and I get it from praying it doesn't look like anything has been done and there's an awful lot to do so we get very distracted and we get very discouraged and we lose heart and this is something that this you know Luke says Jesus told this parable tell people they should always pray and not lose heart and I'll say more about that but I want to just say our the first part of what I want to talk about is why should we have to pray what's the point I mean since it doesn't always seem to accomplish anything what is the principal value of it why would God want us to pray anyway I've known some good Christian people who say you know I don't pray for anything specific because I just figured God knows better than I do what needs to be done and frankly why should I give him my benighted advice when he knows better I might be praying for something that he he knows better he'll do it I'll just say do what you want to do God you know and I'm not going to pray for anything specific they say but that's I mean that's reasoning pretty clearly I remember C.S. Lewis talked about skeptics that he had talked to said well if God knows what to do won't he do it anyway if he's all good and you know if he doesn't know what to do he certainly should go to someone smarter than me to give him advice about it you know and yet God wants us to pray the Bible says that we're commanded to pray we ought to always to pray we ought never to be discouraged to die but yet Jesus said your father knows what you have needed before you ask right your father knows you need these things he knows what you have needed before yes well then if he knows what I need what's the point of asking nothing just kind of deliver well there are reasons for that and one of which has to do

with the reason we exist which frankly if you listen to my show often enough I get asked this enough why why are we here and you've heard what I have to say about that so I'll say it very briefly right now and that is that when God made man he made him for a distinct purpose he had made all the animal creation and the plant creation and in Genesis 1 and verse 26 it says God said let us make man in our own image and let us give him dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the beasts of the field and so he made man in his own image male and female he made them he said have dominion over the plants in the field the animals and so forth in other words God said I think we'll make man so that we can put somebody in charge of all this stuff that we've made I've made plants and animals beautiful world I want to leave somebody I want to put somebody in charge of that which I consider to be very analogous to a man who starts a business and wants to leave his children leave the business to his children wants to raise them up in management and eventually to run the business for a very common desire that entrepreneurs have I think I know if I was an entrepreneur I'd love it if my children could be trained up to carry on what I started and that's pretty much what God did that was his motivation he says listen I'm gonna make man different than the animals the animals can't really rule anything because they can't make decisions they're not really there are free will they're not really rational but I can make somebody who's more like us more like me God says who is rational who can make decisions I can put them in charge of this and that's what he had minded sometimes called the Dominion mandate theologians refer to that the Dominion mandate is a God mandated that human beings take Dominion over the creation and steward it manage it for him so that's that's what he made us for now I think a lot of Christians either never asked or never get an answer why God made us and they just assume the reason God made us so we can go to heaven when we die so that we can kind of be happy with Jesus for eternity well being happy with Jesus certainly is a something I hope for but that the Bible never states that God made people to go to heaven it says he made people to have Dominion over the earth and if you have to realize this would never have been interrupted if Adam and Eve had not sinned God said the day you eat this fruit you'll die but if they hadn't eaten the fruit they wouldn't die they'd still be here now they'd be like 6,000 years old but not aged they they would be immortal because God had the tree of life there they only deprived of access to the tree of life after they sinned if they had not sinned they'd be in that tree of life and it'd be prolonging their life forever and when they did sin God said well we don't want them to eat the tree of life now in this condition so we'll guard the way there so they won't eat it and live forever because now man was a sinner which means self-destructive and society destructive we don't want people like that forever around here they can have another chance but but we're not gonna let him just eat the tree of life and carry on their life of rebellion and crime and mayhem so that got interrupted but Jesus came back to seek and to save that which was lost and what was lost was a creation that had been perfect that had been governed by perfect children of God but who got corrupted and so the creation became corrupted so the Bible indicates that the creation is groaning as we speak waiting for the manifestation of the sons of

God says in Romans chapter 8 and that when we ourselves are delivered he's Paul talking about in the resurrection he calls it the the redemption of our body in Romans 8 but it says when we're delivered from the bondage of decay that is when we're not decaying we're not aging we're not you know the second law of thermodynamics isn't affecting us adversely when that happens in the resurrection when we're glorified then the whole creation it says will also be delivered from the bondage of decay that's in Romans all that's Romans 8 Peter says that when Jesus comes he's gonna melt you know the earth with a fervent heat and burn up the heavens and make a new heavens new earth in which righteousness was and when Revelation 21 describes that it's kind of like the Garden of Eden it's different because the Garden of Eden only had two people and it's just a garden but this is gonna have millions of people so it's a city but it's a perfect city the New Jerusalem and it's on the new earth where it says the tree of life is there again it says there's no more curse it's like the uncursed unfallen world and guess what we're gonna reign with Christ the Bible says Jesus said to his disciples blessed are you make you'll inherit the earth he didn't make that up that was from Psalm 37 it says it says the meek shall inherit the earth God's plan is for people to inherit the earth righteous people turn the earth and do what he had mine in the first place that is rule with him over the creation and this is on earth you might say well doesn't the Bible say we're gonna go to heaven yeah if you die before Jesus comes back you'll go to heaven there's nowhere else to go for you if you're not a Christian there's other places people can go but if you're a Christian there's nowhere you can go when you die except to be with Jesus but that's temporary he's coming back here he's not gonna just leave us living up there and him come down here and rain down here no he's the Bible says he's gonna rain over the earth and we're gonna rain with him so if you die you go to heaven your spirit will go to heaven your body in the ground when Jesus comes back you'll raise your body bring back you with him it says in first Thessalonians 4 14 and then we'll reign with him it says that in Revelation 5 10 that the inhabitants of heaven are praising God because this is you have you know redeemed men out of every nation and kingdom and tongue and race and you've made them a kingdom of priests and they shall reign on the earth that's the plan for God gave the earth to us heaven is not our home as much as popular you know devotional songs and so forth say though this earth is not my home well yeah kind of it kind of is but not in this condition you know we're gonna leave this earth we're gonna be with Jesus in heaven but when he comes back he's like a new earth and that is in fact going to be our our home and that you know it says that in in Psalm 115 verse 16 it says heaven even the heavens are the Lord's but the earth he has given to the sons of men in other words heaven that's God's realm him and the angels the disembodied you know spirits that's that's a good place for them to live it's a spiritual place but God made people in human bodies physical bodies and he's given the earth to the sons of men and that's why there's gonna be a resurrection you know if I die and go to be with Jesus in heaven and then I have to come back to the resurrection people so why be resurrected why do I need a body I'm already in heaven already with Jesus well Jesus is in a body and he's going to come back and rain on a physical earth and and you

with him hopefully and if you do you're gonna need a physical body too just like Adam and Eve had God didn't make people to be disembodied spirits he made them to be physical people living on a physical earth sinlessly in a perfect world that's what Adam and Eve were that was God's place and that's very good when he made them that's that's what I was after and that was lost through sin Jesus has come to redeem what was lost and to restore it and when he comes back that's what the Bible says he'll do and so yeah we go to heaven when we die but a lot of people haven't really sorted out or thought much about biblical eschatology have to realize that that's not we're gonna be forever we're gonna rain on earth with Jesus that's what the Bible says now in the meantime those of us who have turned him are already taking up that project we're not reigning over other people it's not like we're trying to seize political power and make laws to make people obey us and we're gonna be the boss we're gonna be this rather than servants but we do impact the earth in the direction that God wants it to develop until he comes back and what is that well a lot of the parables tell us it's like a little mustard seed that grows into a great plant to fill the world it's like a little bit of leaven put into a lump of dough that caused the whole dough to rise Daniel compared to a little stone that grows into a great mountain to fill the whole earth Jesus told us about a the kingdom of God is like someone who sowed seeds in his field and he went and whether he slept or was awake the seed grew of its own he didn't know how but just it grew first the blade then the then the ear and then the full mature grain in the ear he said when the mature grain was there then he put in the sickle because the harvest had come so we know that God is going to harvest on the last day but that grain has to grow and it has to mature and so forth because there's something God is doing in the world and we're supposed to be promoting that project and frankly experiencing it it's called the kingdom of God it's a growing proposition that began very small when Jesus was here and it's now fills most of the earth every nation in the world has probably millions of course about some of the Muslim countries probably have a few tens or dozens but frankly the kingdom of God has penetrated the whole world and it's continuing to develop that's what the Bible describes it as that's that's what the Bible teaches now our prayers are the most powerful way we have of influencing God's project his kingdom to expand and fill the earth more that's why he says when you pray pray your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is not in heaven but on earth it's already done in heaven everyone in heaven obeys God but that's not true down here yet and let your will be done on earth the way it is in heaven now and that's your kingdom coming advancing spreading as it has been for the past 2,000 years and will continue until Jesus sees that the harvest is ripe and decides to put in the sickle I don't think the harvest is right but I can't I can't say Jesus won't come right now because he hasn't let me in on what he's going to come but he did say what he's waiting for and I don't see maturity I don't see ripe grain really in what we call the church today so on but maybe he sees things differently than I do all I can say is there's a project we're not just sitting on a bus bench waiting for the rapture to come we are assigned a role in reestablishing the dominion of Christ as the human representative because he's that's why God became a man so that

man can inherit the earth and it could be him and will reign with him the Bible says so his dominion expands as people become converted and become true followers of Jesus when a person becomes embraces Christ as his Lord or her Lord and begins to really follow him and he's their king that's when the kingdom has expanded you know through them and through others who come into it that way now prayer is the most powerful thing we have for that now the other thing that's almost equally powerful is our preaching well the reason I don't say our preaching is as powerful as our prayers is because our preaching is imperfect a lot of times we're very zealous but we're not preaching it very clearly we're not preaching very truly sometimes and some people don't know what the gospel is and they preach a wrong gospel but but at least through the preaching of the gospel the gospel spreads the kingdom spreads and that's good but the even the preaching is not affectional unless it's backed up with prayer you know if I'm just if I'm a very eloquent gospel evangelist and that's not the case I'm not really a great evangelist I've done some evangelist but that's not where the anointing is in my life I'm afraid I wish I'd love that it was but if I was a great eloquent intelligent well-schooled evangelist I couldn't get anyone saved unless the power of God is accompanying the preaching you can convince people's minds you can intimidate people you can scare people into making a decision but you can't convert them people do say sinner's prayers all the time under pressure but they haven't been changed in many cases and so Paul said to the Thessalonians that he when he came to these as he knew that they were really saved because his when we preach you the word didn't come to you just in word only but it came in great power and assurance and the Holy Ghost in other words he saw a powerful transformation he saw that the assurance of the truth of the gospel was imparted to them not by his arguments but by the Holy Spirit this is what we need if we want to see the preachers getting people saved more or the teachers getting people disciplined more if we want to see the kingdom's river we need to pray more because God's spirit moves God's hand moves in response to our prayers now again why wouldn't he just do it himself well the reason is because he's raising up children to reign with him and he wants us to get a little practice he wants us to be involved we actually have a stake in the outcome because we're going to inherit this world and therefore if we have a stake in it he wants us to participate in it it's like Israel God was going to give them the land of Israel the land of Canaan and he didn't just kind of send a bunch of angels through to wipe out all the Canaanites and just say take it kids it's all yours they had a stake in the outcome and he made them participate just like you would if you were raising children to be responsible for some kind of activity God expects us to be now we pray as you have often heard no doubt in the name of Jesus but what does that mean to pray in the name of Jesus I just want you to look over at John chapter 14 if you would in John 14 14 Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room if you ask anything in my name I will do it will be done uh in this translation I've got it says I will do it now in some translations it doesn't say I will do it because uh it's it's not well here's here's how it differs if you've got a modern translation it reads a little different than what you let me let me just read it the way out mine says I'll tell you what is different in the

way that the modern translations say um start over on that one let's see so Jesus said if you ask anything in my name I will do it many modern translations say if you ask me anything I will do it now I think the translations are wrong not always but in this case because it doesn't make any sense to say if you ask me something in my name when you are asking in Jesus name you're asking somebody else invoking him as the authority behind your prayer that's what you when you do something in someone else's name it means you've been authorized to act on their part and Jesus a couple of chapters later which is the same night in the same room he made it very clear asking his name was not the same as asking him in fact he said asking in his name involves asking the father in his name so if you look at John 16 23 and 24 Jesus said in that day you will ask me nothing most assuredly I say to you whatever you ask the father in my name he will give it to you until now you have asked nothing in my name ask and you will receive that your joy may be full okay so he says you're not be asking me you're not be praying to me you can pray to the father you're going to ask him in my name I authorize you to come before the father with my passkey not everyone can just approach God but you can if you're mine I'm giving you my name as the passcode you can go to the father and you can come to him on my behalf see when someone is acting on your behalf they're doing your business as your agent so if you have a you know some kind of fund manager you know who's managing your finances well they make investments and sign papers and do things for you transfer your money from here to with your authority they're acting in your name if somebody has the power of attorney then they act in the person's name whose power of attorney they have and they are doing the business of that person on their behalf that's what it means to act in someone's name Jesus you can ask the father in my name my business Jesus Jesus is to ask the father for things but he says you can now do that you you with my name you can come to the father and he'll accept you as if as if you were me practically and then he says this in verse 20 26 in that day you will ask in my name and I do not say to you that I shall pray to the father for you oh I always thought that's what was going on when I was a kid you pray in Jesus name because you figured God's kind of too busy to worry about my silly little prayers so I can talk to Jesus he's got apparently more time on his hands than God does and so and he's God's son so God will gee he'll let Jesus in all the time me not so much so I'll talk to Jesus and he'll talk to the father I mean isn't that the way many of us have kind of assumed you know that's we pray to God in Jesus name well no it's it doesn't mean he goes forth he says exactly the opposite he says I'm not saying that I will ask the father for you I'm not saying that I will pray to the father for you for the father himself loves you that's the point the father loves you he wants to hear from you you can come to him in my name because there's no access to him except in my name but I'm not going to go and talk to him for you talk to him you talk to him that's what I've authorized you to do you go to the father on my behalf and you pray such things as you know I would pray and you're authorized to do that in my name so the father will listen to you just like he listened to me Jesus says and this is what prayer is now I know lots of Christians feel much more comfortable praying to Jesus I'm and I don't want to feel embarrassed if that's what you do some people have

told me they pray Jesus because they just don't feel comfortable with the father they've got this idea that he's the guy who sends lightning bolts down if you'd step out of line he killed us when he tried to stabilize the ark and he sent the flood and incinerated Sodom he's kind of a mean God but Jesus is very gentle meek and mild I feel comfortable going to Jesus not so much for the father so I'll talk to Jesus you mean I have to talk to the father yeah the father loves you God is not a grumpy God he doesn't have a short fuse he's not peevish he loved the world so much that he sent his son that was a sinful world we're talking about God is on the side of sinners he's much more on the side of the righteous but he's on the side of sinners he wants all sinners to be saved he didn't have to do anything to save anyone but he loved the world he still does and he sent his son it was not Jesus who volunteered to come down and save us from an angry God it was a loving God who commissioned Jesus to come down and save us for himself because he loved us and wanted that relationship restored you're that I'm not Jesus I'm not going to tell you I'm going to pray for you to him you pray to him you talk to him in my name because he loves you and he welcomes you that's great and so you need to be prepared to act in Christ's name and of course acting in Christ's name means you're doing what he would do you're praying such prayers as he would agree with and would himself pray and you're doing it with the assurance that the name of Jesus gets you right through the door into the presence of God and that he receives you as if you were Jesus himself that's what Jesus is saying here about prayer when people don't feel comfortable talking to the father I'm not sure how they got the impression that Jesus is you know nicer than the father so he said if you've seen me you've seen the father so we're both the same when Jesus taught us to pray he said pray this way our father Jesus taught us to pray to the father not to him and he said the time's coming you're not going to ask me anything now the disciples previously had been asking Jesus stuff he was their rabbi he was their messiah he's the one they were disciples of they were learning from him they'd ask him things he said I'm going to be gone I'm going away and you won't be asking me things anyway you'll ask my father in my name now this tells us something I think about why we are to pray one is because he wants us to start taking adult responsibility the children the disciples are like children spiritually speaking in fact even after his resurrection just before he went up and they were fishing he shouted out to them children have you caught anything he used the word for a little child and they didn't even know it was him imagine how that must have been annoying to them who's this guy calling me a child look I have hair under my arms guy I'm grown up but Jesus still to them to him they were just like still little children they had much to learn in fact in the upper room he said I have many things to tell you still but you're not able to bear them now so when I'm gone and the holy spirit comes he'll lead you into all truth you're you're like kindergartners now but you're gonna have to grow up because I'm going away and you're gonna have to step up you're gonna have to talk to the father in my name you're gonna have to learn how to take some charge of the way things are going by your prayers and by your activities there's a sense in which prayer is God dignifying us as adult children of his with giving us some real responsibility but it's also we still come to

him because we're dependent on him like little children I mean there's a sense in which you you come to your father with requests when you can't take care of yourself little children can't take care of themselves they have to depend on they have to ask dad for or mom for things you come to your father because you are acknowledging I'm a child at one level I'm a child fully dependent on you if you don't do it it's not going to happen I can't do it but on the other hand I'm stepping up I'm going to take some adult responsibility here and say okay God I think there's some things you want done I'm going to pray and ask you to do them I'm going to start engaging you I'm going to start moving your hand in the world because that's really my destiny someday I'm going to be reigning with you and this is we'll just get our feet wet in this kind of business here now asking God to do things is him involving us in the way that he intended people to be involved in the world when he made us and so that's why we pray and and it does in fact it does move the hand of God nothing moves the hand of God except prayer Wesley might not have been completely correct but he might have been when he said God does nothing except in response to prayer I don't know how we would test that the Bible doesn't say God does nothing except in response to prayer but it might be true because even if we haven't prayed someone somewhere else may be praying for whatever happens but it's interesting too some people say well God doesn't do anything in response to prayer I've known people who had such a I don't know if it's a Calvinist or some other kind of view that felt like well God's already predestined everything is going to happen prayer doesn't change any every single thing that's going to happen it's already predestined it's going to happen whether I pray or not so why should we pray well the answer they give is well because prayer changes you you know it doesn't change anything because everything's already choreographed by God's sovereign purpose it's going to happen no matter what you do but it changes you I say wait a minute if everything's choreographed isn't me changing isn't that already in the planter is that already predestined why would why would prayer have the power to change me and nothing else me changing is something too and if that's predestined then I shouldn't have to pray for that either but the Bible nowhere says that the purpose of prayer is to change you no doubt it will no no doubt it helps a great deal to change you but the purpose of prayer is to get things done that are the will of God to have done on earth as in heaven that's why we pray every day your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is why pray it if it's going to happen automatically what's the point but you see the Bible does say that things are changed by prayer because in James chapter four verses one and two he says from once come wars and fightings among you do they not come from here from your lusts that war in your members he says you lust and desire to have you fight in war you kill each other and yet you don't have because you don't ask that's interesting he's talking about wars I mean that's world changing stuff is wars nations topple or rise because of wars and he says now these people war because they don't have what you've got going you don't have the things they would go to war for to obtain you could have that result but you don't because you don't ask you don't have because you don't ask now he certainly is saying if you had asked you'd have it right I mean if the

reason I don't have something is because I didn't ask rather than the reason I don't have it is because God just didn't choose to give it to me didn't predestine it you know whatever no he's saying you don't have it because you didn't ask which means if you had asked you would have it that means prayer would have changed the situation but you just didn't pray and therefore you don't have now that suggests very strongly that things that need to be done need to be prayed for we shouldn't just say well someone else will pray for it or God will just do it that's not what the bible says he's assigned us a role in advancing the cause of the kingdom until the time comes when he actually gives us crowns and thorns says well done you you managed a few things well now rule over five cities now rule over ten cities this is our training to help manage steward have dominion over the things that God has put us over or more properly what he's put Jesus over because we're Jesus hands and feet we're his body where his flesh and his bones Jesus has been given authority over everything we're his agents we have his name to act with the power of attorney on his behalf he is extended into the present world still by us being here as his body and therefore he counts on us just like i count on my body if my head wants to go over and get a glass of a bottle of water out in the lobby it's not going to get there unless my body will carry me there well i can command someone else for you but but my body that's its job you know the body is supposed to do the will of the head and Jesus has a will and we're supposed to be doing it and that's our prayers are the great way to do that now there's other ways to do it because we also have to obey we also have to do the works work and prayer are just two parts of the same project some i've heard people say you know i'm i'm uh striving to uh get a new car my car is broken down i'm i'm working extra hours over time so i can put some money away and get a car that'll be reliable and i've sometimes sent people like that well have you prayed for that oh i would never pray for anything selfish like that i'd never pray for anything for myself well wait a minute if it's selfish why are you working for it if it's if it's the will of god for you to have it why can't you pray for it and work for it if it's not god's looking at it you shouldn't be working for it in other words anything that you can rightly work for you can pray for because you should be doing both because you believe it's what god wants and anything you can't pray for you shouldn't work for because you assume it's something god does want your your works and your prayers are in partnership and you know sometimes when you pray for something the next thing is you've got to go out and do something about it in the the last verse of matthew 9 jesus said the fields are wide under harvest but the labors are few he told his disciples pray to the lord of harvest he'll send more labors then the next thing he did he put them in groups of two and sent them out as laborers you know pray that god will send more labors and by the way i'm commissioning you to go out and be a laborer now uh you know when when the multitudes were hungry because they've been following jesus for three days and there was no food and the disciples said lord send these people away so they go find some food he's praying they're praying that these people can be fed he said what do you have what do i have i got nothing there's a boy here's got you know five loaves and two fishes but what are those he said well give me those we'll see if you

know you go he said how much you have to go and find out so they you know they said lord please feed the multitudes great idea get involved in that go out and gather the food from whoever has it around there well and then he broke into now you hand it out to these people and i pray for the world to be fed but maybe i'm supposed to have something to do with that you know my prayers and my works have got to be consonant they have to be on the same project okay now that's why prayer is a priority because if we don't pray things won't get done but then there's the other thing why is it that even though we do pray things don't get done why is it that we pray for things and they don't happen and a lot of times they certainly seem to be things that are the will of god praying for unsaved loved ones that's got to be the will of god certainly praying for righteousness to prevail in the world that certainly would be god's will you think and it is and we should be working and praying for those things but why is it that we pray for things that are perfectly good things and they don't necessarily happen well there's several reasons let me give you the first one from uh james chapter four i'm going to run through these quickly i've already probably run out of time probably and i always do but i'm only hurting myself i'm cutting into my q a time which i never can have enough of that for my people i'd rather have more of that all the time so i'll punish myself by finishing these points in james chapter four verse uh three it's right after it's the very next sentence after james says you do not have because you do not ask but then he figures well i know you've asked and don't have still on some things he says you ask and do not receive because you ask amiss that means with the wrong motives that you may consume it on your pleasures or your desires oh okay so i pray for things and sometimes at least they don't happen because my motives are not right now that's not the only there's other explanations maybe my motives aren't right but that's the first thing i need to check what am i why am i praying for this uh i mean am i as interested in praying for other people's kids to be saved as i am my own why am i more interested in my kids maybe i'm a little selfish you know why am i praying for you know my daily bread when there's a lot of people i should be praying for their daily bread too i mean am i using prayer as kind of a magic lamp that i rub and jesus the genie comes out and says your wish is my command if that's how i'm looking at it it's a magic wand i wave over all my wishes and they materialize like you know a carriage out of a pumpkin is that what prayer is well that's what a lot of people frankly a lot of people don't pray and accept at times when that's what it is you know they're not really on god's project they're on their own project their motives are not what they are supposed to be i just want to show you one of the very few prayers of the apostles that's given to us in uh in some detail we we know that the apostles pray a lot lots of times it says they pray but uh rarely do we get really a good sample of one of their prayers at some length and here it is in acts chapter four and this is this is when the sanhedrin had told peter and john if you don't stop preaching in the name of jesus you're going to be beaten maybe killed so it was kind of a crisis and so here's how they prayed in verse 24 um this is acts 4 24 so when they heard that that is the threats they raised their voice to god with one accord and said lord you are god who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in who by the mouth of

your servant david have said why did the nations rage and the people plot vain things the kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the lord and against his christ for truly against your holy servant jesus whom you anointed both herod and pontius pilate with the gentiles and the people of israel were gathered together to do whatever your hand and your purpose determined before to be done now lord look on their threats and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word by stretching out your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant jesus and when they had prayed the place was shaking that was apparently a powerful prayer shook the whole building how is that different let's say than one of our prayers let's just say your pastor has just announced that we've been told that if we come to church again next week we'll all be arrested thrown in jail and put on trial for our lives let's pray what we pray oh lord please protect us lord please don't let our past be taken please don't let the bad guys hurt us lord have mercy on us it's all about us what's this prayer in in similar situation they say lord you made the heavens you made the earth you made the sea you made everything you're big enough to handle everything and you even predicted that this would happen you said by your servant david why do the heathen rage why do they resist the christ you said this would happen and so what we're asking you right now god is give your servants boldness to not back down and and allow that signs and wonders may be done by the by our hands so that people be convinced of your message in other words hey we're in trouble but just don't let us be intimidated because this is about you not about us you know and if you notice if you ever read that prayer and with a pen mark every time it says you are your they never say us or we better even say give us fullness give your servants boldness let signs be done by your servant jesus it's you who made the heavens earth it's you who said by your servant david your servant david and so it is as you said that herod and pontius pilate and people that came against your servant jesus and now we're your servants and give your servants boldness it's all about it's all god directed it's not me me i i mine there's none of that in there it's all about god we're on your mission these guys they said they're trying to scare us they're threatening our lives don't let us be afraid we're your servants let your servants serve you let your servants accomplish your work this is their prayers this is not bad motivation for prayer this is apostolic prayer it's motivated by god where is it this prayer is that's it's just about you god it's not about me it's about your project it's about your kingdom and that's why of course when jesus taught us to pray the first thing is your kingdom come your will be done and we can get around and give us this day our daily bread eventually but let's talk about your purposes first and only the daily bread because we just need that much so we can keep serving you we don't need a lot of bread just give us enough for today we'll ask you again for tomorrows because this isn't about me getting prosperous isn't about me getting my my dreams come true this is about me being able to serve you having all that's necessary to do so so your kingdom can come and your will be that's what prayer is for if we're praying for any other motivation than that then we're probably like james said we're you ask but you don't receive because you pray amiss you're praying for with

the wrong motives that no doubt has something to do with why some prayers are not answered james said that is why some prayers are not answered what other reasons might there be well of course it's possible that what we're praying for isn't specifically what god wants to do we may think it is but it may not be in first john chapter 5 and verse 14 john said this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us and if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask we know that we have the desires we ask of him so if we ask anything according to his will oh his will oh what about my will well that's not really what this is about what if god says no because it's not his will well what were you praying for something other than his will were you hoping that your prayers would accomplish something that's not his will are you are you praying that anything will ever happen in your life or in the world that's not his will obviously if i'm praying and what i'm praying is god says hey i've got a better idea it's not my will i say let's go your way god your way is better than my way and when you know the sisters of lazarus came to jesus and you the one you love is sick they were sure it was his will to come heal but he didn't in fact he even made them think it was he said this sickness is not unto death but for the glory of god so they're oh he's not going to die then he died and when jesus came they were kind of bitter i we asked you to come and if you've been here you would have he would have lived and just didn't i tell you that if you believe you'll see the glory of god i said this is not unto death but unto the glory of god do you believe this and and so you know he raised him from the dead as we know but see they were asking him to heal him jesus healed people wholesale all over the place certainly he'd want to heal his friend they were wrong this time that wasn't the plan he had something better in mind and if he ever doesn't like our suggestions his are better and we should be very happy for him to deny our prayers if we've prayed according to his will in the name of jesus with faith and and he says no i'm going to veto that one we always should pray with the idea that he has the veto jesus did now the word of faith people say you should never say if it is your will when you pray because they say you will have what you say but you have to believe with all your heart you declare what you want don't even give god an out because you're just giving yourself an out you're just trying to say if it doesn't happen then you know it wasn't god's will but it's god's will to heal it's god's will to prosper it's god's will to do whatever you say this is what the word of faith teaching says so don't ever qualify your prayers by saying if it is your will well sorry their doctrine's wrong jesus qualified his prayer with that father if it's your will let this cup pass from me but not my will but yours be done jesus asked god to veto his own prayers if it wasn't god's will if our prayers are not answered in many cases i think we could probably assume well i think we've ticked all the other boxes the only thing here is it didn't happen it must not be god's will i'll leave it in his hands it's his to do he's been asked you know the the you know the the requisition has been submitted now it's his to worry about and it may be that he's got something better in mind than i could dream of my prayers are after all not perfect but god's will is so it may be our motives are bad or it may simply be we got good motives but we're praying for something that god's just saying no that's not really what i had in mind but thanks for

asking you know i've got a better idea we'll do it do what i want this time and then of course there's another and that is found in james chapter one and that is of course praying in faith now this is where the word of faith people come in they say if you don't get your prayers answers because you didn't have enough faith if you're not healed you don't have enough faith if you're not prosperous you don't have enough faith if you didn't get the promotion you didn't have enough faith because you all you need is faith no that's not all you need but it certainly is important you also need to be praying according to the will of god with good motives too and i'm not so sure that everyone who's praying that god will make them rich can be sent to have good motives they always think they do yeah god i'm buying this lottery ticket because if i win that 30 million dollars you you'd be amazed at all the money i will give away to charity you know i've got a good motive for this i'll i won't keep more than 30 000 for myself you know the rest goes to charity now i mean people sometimes think they're you know thinking of god and they're really thinking of themselves but the truth is that faith is essential james said this in james one verses five through seven he says if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of god who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him but let him ask in faith with no doubting for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed for let not that man suppose that he'll receive anything from the lord the person who prays without faith you know don't think you're going to get anything now how can you pray with faith if you don't know what the will of god is and you know that he might deny it how can like somebody's sick they asked me to pray for him how can i pray in faith for him to be healed when it i know it's not always god's will to heal it wasn't his will to heal lazars so there's at least that time and i think i've seen some other times when it wasn't i've known lots of people well maybe not a lot but too many friends of mine who died prematurely while they had strong faith that they're going to be healed and it just didn't happen it's not only faith there's the will of god that has to be in the picture but how can i have faith if i don't know it's the will of god of course it's my will that anyone would get healed but maybe god's how can i believe it well this is the thing faith is to be faith in god not in an outcome particularly my faith is that god is on the throne that what i'm asking him to do is exactly what he is capable to do and exactly what he will do unless he does something else and if he does something else my faith in him tells me i trust him in that i think he's got a better idea he's smarter than me he's got he's better intentioned than i am you know if god doesn't give what i'm asking for i trust him completely that what he is doing instead is the right thing that's trusting god trusting in an outcome is more like magic you know there's something i want to do i i put in the wing of bat the eye of newt boil to a certain temperature for 20 minutes and uh serve you know on rice now that and then you're supposed to get some magical thing happening now prayer is not magic prayer is the expression of our faith in a person named god that he is wise he's good he's powerful he can do what he wants to do and he wants us to ask but of course we know that some things we might want and we might ask for he might not do that doesn't mean i can't ask in faith i ask in faith that he will do what i'm asking unless he's got a better idea and if he has a better idea that i

want him to do that instead because i trust him i trust that he knows what he's doing and i know very well that i don't most of the time so i we pray with faith in god and you know if he's promised something and it's truly a promise to all people then we can pray that he'll give us that uh but some of the things are not general promises and we just have to say well i'm not sure god if this is your will but i trust you but i'm asking you to do this if if that is your will you know but i trust you if you don't do what i want i still trust you now two other points i'll be done here another reason i think that prayers are not might not be answered this is something i've never included in teaching about prayer before it's just something i've really had on my heart lately and so i was glad to have a chance to stick this in prayers might not be answered because they aren't unified that is christians are not praying corporately in unison in unity remember jesus said in matthew 18 if any two of you agree is touching anything when they ask it'll be done now again when it says whenever if you do this it'll always happen you gotta take in the whole counsel of god it's got to be the will of god so you must be asking in the name of jesus not everything's mentioned in every verse the holistic teaching of christ has got to be taken together but he indicated that normatively we should expect to be praying with other people when the disciples said teach us to pray says here pray like this our father not my father yeah you are my father but we're praying together about this us all of us our father which aren't in heaven hell would be your name you know we get down a little further give us this day our daily bread you know i used to pray like that basically because i figured you know i live by faith i need to ask god to provide my my needs but i realize he's saying i'm supposed to be praying give us not just me and my wife and my kids the whole church is supposed to give us when i pray that now which i do virtually every day i say god all of your people worldwide who are looking to you for their vision who are calling out to you for bread give us give us answer their prayers and mine i'm part of a body that's worldwide that is in unison raising up corporate prayers for corporate needs i don't really need as much i forgot about my daily bread i've got enough for the rest of the day thanks i probably have enough to get through tomorrow too and maybe a long time to come from that but but some the church needs to be fed the people of god need to be fed some of them don't have enough for today and you know so god give us we i'm praying as an agent of your people collectively give us our day forgive us our sins the church it sins a lot of times when i'm praying i'm not aware of any particular so i've committed since last time i prayed but i know someone has i know that the church has sinned there's people forgive us deliver us from the evil one lead us not into temptation i'm praying corporately for the whole church and frankly the church should be praying corporately together now when i'm praying alone i'm still praying for the whole church i'm assuming there's a lot of christians millions around the world praying that same prayer possibly at the same moment but the early church prayed regularly together now churches often have prayer meetings where maybe one out of a hundred people in the church show up and you know it's funny i when i was in santa cruz on the radio i every thursday i was teaching a bible study at a church that let me use their building and i'd give an announcement on there and tonight i'm teaching on the

book of acts at seven o'clock but anyone who wants to join me and pray for revival i'll be there six o'clock feel free to come thousands of people are probably or at least hundreds are hearing this announcement you want to pray for revival here's a place i'll gather with anyone who wants to pray for revival i did that for six months only one person ever came uh i thought you know i guess there's not much interest in it but the church has lost its faith in prayer and and also lost to a very large its sense of need for prayer i mean i'll get by if i don't pray today chances are i'll be okay tomorrow chances are don't want to assume anything but there's a good chance but god wants us as an army gathered together offering up by faith in the name of jesus the requests of his of his subjects for the sake of his kingdom and we just don't do it enough and i mean we do have corporate prayer at the beginning of a meeting the end of a meeting uh maybe even like in our home church we set aside some time after the singing where anyone can give a prayer request and maybe we can pray out so for a little while maybe 10-15 minutes you know and uh you know we'll let it go longer if people want to do it but a lot of times that's all that's needed but there's not they're just not this passion to pray as as a united body and i and when jesus said two or more gather i think what he's saying is prayer it's just not for you and your personal relationship with jesus this is you and your brothers and sisters and whoever else shares concerns for the king of god pray together or two or more gathered gathered in one place and you know we see this in the book of acts when they were waiting for the holy spirit you know jesus said tarry in jerusalem till you uh you know receive power from on high i think we want that most of us i think would like that and we read on act chapter 2 verse 1 when the day of pentecost had fully come they were all this 120 believers they were all with one accord in one place they were of the same mind they were focused they had set aside the previous 10 days since jesus had ascended to be there looking for the power praying for the power uh probably fasting i wouldn't be surprised and united they were in one accord focused on one thing and god heard and poured out power on them and there's one of the probably the greatest revival so far in church history took place as a result of their prayers we read one of their prayers a moment ago making a different point but i should point out that in that place acts 4 24 when the disciples were released from the sanhedrin who threatened them it says so when they had heard that they raised their voice to god in one accord and said now i don't know who said this says they said they certainly didn't all speak spontaneously verbatim there must have been somebody who spoke on their behalf or maybe different people said different parts but this is a group prayer and says with one accord they went before god with this need the church very seldom prays together in any significant way and partly because the church is not in one accord you know it says in first peter chapter three i think it's verse seven he says husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge giving honor to them as the weaker vessel and heirs together the grace of life so that your prayers be not hindered if you and your wife you and your husband are not on good terms then that prevents something from happening that should be happening your prayers together and it's not just husbands and wives it's other brothers and sisters other denominations people in your own church that you're

not getting along with if there's there's friction there then that may be why god says no i'm not going to honor that this isn't just about you and your concerns this is about my people being united with one voice praying corporately praying unitedly and i really would love to see more of this in america we you know they do this in other countries more but um again it's hard to get people to come out for a prayer meeting i remember i was uh i went to a meeting at a church in santa cruz where a guest speaker had come from uganda there was apparently a great revival going on in uganda this is over 10 years ago i think now but i had not heard about this guy came over from uganda talking about how many people were being saved and all it was changing the the government was changing all kinds of good things were happening and uh and he says but they pray they have prayer meetings all day long every day and he said he said he came over to america and asked the pastor you know does your church pray very much he said oh yeah we have one one night a week we have a prayer meeting and then and the guy from uganda says wait a minute so you get together once a week and you punch the devil give him a black eye then you give him a week to recover you know if we believed in prayer and by the way not believing in prayer is a good way to not have prayers answered if we believed in prayer we would be very motivated to get together with other people just for that purpose just for that purpose it's the most powerful thing that can be done in the world what else could motivate you to do anything than have the power of the creator of the universe with his hand ready to move at your request to change things even to overthrow governments and raise up godly governments i didn't used to pray specifically like this but when i pray your kingdom come i pray god you know all those people who are in government who are corrupt all those people who have evil intentions all those who are opposed to you sweep them out remove them i'm not asking you to kill them just get them out of power and let their office be replaced by somebody who will do your will i mean why not you have not because you ask not or you ask with the wrong motives because you don't want persecution or you ask without faith but james said wars and findings come around because because national conflicts are not being resolved because you're not asking you'd have it if you asked it and so prayer you know what else could you do with your time that's a better use of your time it's world changing what else do you do every day or with any hours of your day that's world changing you can change the fate of a nation on the other side of the world from one little spot nations all over the world can be changed if you if the church is gathered to focus and pray and to move god's hand one other point another reason our prayers may not be answered i truly think is they're not very desperate now i lay me down to sleep pray dear lord my soul to keep uh if i should die before i wake i pray dear lord my soul take amen you know not very desperate prayers and you know in one sense we can't be blamed that we are less desperate than people in third world countries we're just not hungry we're not uncomfortable we were talking about praise god for the air conditioning you know i'll tell you when i go to africa when i go to south america when i go to these third world countries where it's really hot i found that it's the only country i ever go to where the cars don't have air conditioning i think they pick me up at the airport and it's like it's as

hot as a car you don't even want the windows up because it just blows that hot air in your face right every car here has air conditioning every house almost so i mean we're just not very uncomfortable where we don't really feel much of a need we know we're supposed to we know we're supposed to be interested in things other than our own comforts and our own well-being but it's just hard it's hard to feel the need for it and the answer to that is to say i'm gonna i'm gonna recognize some needs i haven't really like the deterioration of my whole society around me or if my society is good there's some countries i'm sure in some parts of the world that really are in trouble and the christians there are my brothers too where one member of the body suffers all suffer and there's good reason to be desperate with god if i'm not hurting somebody is and i'm supposed to be as concerned about them as me that's what it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself which is our only obligation if we could just stop focusing on us and what we want and what we need and realize hey i don't really need much i don't really want much more than i have i'm good i'll get back with you god when i'm feeling a little you know i'm not feeling so set up i'm okay but that desperation is something that we find in the prayers including the ones we've read from the apostles they're desperate they were in danger as we may be more than we know uh i don't know i don't claim to know what the future holds but i don't think it's looking promising in this country for the freedom of christians um but i could be wrong we'll see but we have to pray in in james chapter 5 it says in verse 17 elijah was a man with a like well i know you gave the previous verse 16 just before that line it says the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it didn't rain on the land for three years and six months having then he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit he says elijah i know he's a spiritual hero but he was a man just like you and me he had the same passions we have he had the same struggles but he prayed that god wouldn't let it rain as a judgment on apostate israel for three and a half years he prayed fervently and he says this is an example of a fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man he prayed fervently for that i don't know if the word fervent which means hot i don't know if that would describe most of our prayers probably probably not and now we come to the passage we opened with which is look chapter 18 beginning the first verse says then he spoke a parable to them that men ought always to pray and not lose and here's the parable there was a certain city in a certain city a judge who did not fear god nor regard man now there was a widow in that city and she came to him saying get justice for me from my adversary and he would not listen for a while but afterward he said within himself though i do not fear god nor regard man yet because this widow troubles me i will avenge her and let her continue coming to me not weary me now this is the prayer the parables teach us to pray always without fainting she kept coming to this guy the only one who could help her she was a widow she had no money no power no social power no political power she had someone oppressing her taking advantage of her probably stealing her property doing something like that and so she went to a judge the person who should attend to those kinds of things for her and he this wasn't a good judge he didn't care as

soon as he found out she couldn't grease his palm he didn't care about her case at all but she kept pestering him and finally said listen in himself i don't care about this woman at all but i care about me so i'm gonna give her what she wants so she stopped pestering me now this one was obviously desperate i mean she was helpless she was a victim of some oppression from a rich neighbor or something and she the government didn't care you know i've heard so many cases lately of people that are really valid case in court and the courts just aren't interested in anything where's the justice here you know i'm not suffering at this moment i've known people who have and i think well it's this woman who's in that position she she was desperate enough that she wouldn't let him go she wouldn't stop hounding him he said finally he'll give it to her now is this unjust judge supposed to be god no but he's in the position toward this widow that god is in toward us he doesn't have god's character he's not he's not unsympathetic towards he's very who isn't sympathetic to other children but he's saying here this man he couldn't have cared less about this woman he didn't even care about what's right he didn't fear god he didn't fear man he didn't care about justice all he knew was if he doesn't give her what she wants he's gonna hear no end of her because she's desperate and she's not giving up now jesus is what he's implying is how much more god who is not an unjust judge how much more god who is a loving father who does care how much more will he respond to your persistent prayers but why does he make me persist well maybe because it's not your time maybe it's because my faith needs to be stretched a little bit to see if i'll still trust him in a delay uh you know there may be things maybe he's maybe there's warfare going on and the enemy hasn't been fully defeated more of my prayers are needed to toward that end we know the story of daniel and daniel 10 where he was praying for and fasting for three and a half for three weeks for 21 days and when the angel finally got through to answer his prayers says yeah you know the day you started praying god sent me i know it sounds like i took the long around but the prince of persia this demonic power was up there and he was holding me back he was fighting me and i couldn't get through until michael came reinforcements from heaven came and now michael's holding this guy off and i got through to you in other words the picture we're getting what's going on when you're praying you don't know it daniel didn't know that was going on daniel by the way didn't defeat it by saying i bind you prince of persia you know it's not like he didn't even know he was there a lot of disciples a lot of christians want to say oh we're going to bind the territorial spirit and daniel didn't his prayers bounded his prayers got a response from god his prayers god was not reluctant he sent him with the dispatch the moment the prayers began but when there was a spiritual interference daniel's continued praying and fasting i believe finally released reinforcements to come now i don't know what all that is about i don't know how all that works in fact it's just about the only passage in the bible that kind of pulls the curtain back to see what's going on up there but it's obvious oh a spiritual warfare is going on there and our prayers a have something to do with the outcome and b may be hindered temporarily because the enemy is resisting it but the worst thing you can do is stop praying you never know how much more praying is going to be before more reinforcements are going to come

and the enemy will be overwhelmed in this situation and your prayer will be answered like i said muller prayed for 50 years for some of his friends and some of them didn't get saved until he died but then two of them they got saved afterwards all the others got saved in his lifetime i mean that's a man who knew how to pray persistently he was desperate for souls if we're not desperate we're not going to keep praying and fasting for 21 days when we're not hearing a peep from heaven you know we'll just give up saying oh i think that's enough i guess god's not going to do this but there's times you know you're praying for the will of god and you know you don't know why it's not happening you know that god can do it and you trust god and your motives are good but you've got to be desperate enough that you say i'm not gonna i'm not gonna stop i know this is you this is like when jake was wrestling with god he said i'm not gonna let you go until you bless me you've crippled me i've been fighting all night i'm weary but i'm not giving up until i get the blessing and that kind of desperation is not found in american prayers often enough i'm not saying it doesn't happen because there's a lot of people who pray frankly probably better than i do and more than i do i certainly and and maybe they're maybe they're very desperate and maybe their prayers are being answered i don't know but prayers are being answered around the world i mean when you hear about whole villages of muslims that you know everyone in the village has a dream about jesus the same night and they all convert that next morning somebody's praying for them so that's somebody's prayers working you just don't know where your prayers are working but you need to say until every last enemy of the kingdom of god is fallen there's a desperate need for the kingdom of god to advance and god's will be done and it's only god who can do it and it's only we who can ask him to do it effectively because he has given us that access through the name of jesus but we need to we need to pray right and i think a lot of times we just pray simple prayers that aren't if they don't if they don't get any results we just figure oh well i guess that doesn't work you know and the devil loves that in fact that's what i mean that's god may be testing your faith like he tested joe's faith i'll bet joe was praying for healing the moment he got sick i don't know how long he stayed sick but his faith was being tested he passed the test but the devil was instrumental in that if the devil's resisting the answer of your prayers maybe god's saying i'm gonna you know i'm gonna let you resist it for a little longer to see if they give up god's trying to stretch you he's trying to raise kids who are adults and responsible future co-rulers with him people who aren't wimps and this is a warfare that's one reason why we get distracted from sort of why do you think the devil doesn't want you to pray anything can distract you and he'll throw all kinds of things up there why he's terrified of prayer of proper prayer and he has reason to be and that's why it's such a priority for christians to pray