

Prayers of Petition for Supernatural Intervention

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[0:00] Exodus 32, and I'm going to read the first 14 verses of the chapter. Moses is on the mount with God receiving the ten laws.

! And when the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, Come, make us gods who will go before us.

As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him. Aaron answered them, Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons, and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.

So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol, cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool.

Then they said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.

[1:12] So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward, they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Go down, because your people whom you brought up out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol, cast in the shape of a calf.

They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.

I have seen these people, the Lord said to Moses, and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.

Then I will make you into a great nation. But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. O Lord, he said, Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?

[2:28] Why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce anger.

Remember, relent, and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self.

I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.

Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. May the Lord bring his word to us now in the power of the Spirit.

Come, Pastor Ted. Amen. Well, I want to speak words of gratitude once more tonight to the elders of the church, their kindness in inviting me to participate in this really joyful, significant celebration, this anniversary of your 25th year of existence.

[3:40] I'm truly privileged to be here, and I thank you for that. Your fellowship has been sweet. I'm also grateful for the kindness of Stan and Deb toward me.

One of the reasons I like to come to Bremen is because I often get to stay with them, and they're just precious to my wife and me.

I'm sorry that my wife can't be here. We have to travel soon to Florida, and she's needing tomorrow and needed yesterday to prepare for that. Just one more word about the missions conference I thought of, just to show you how serious this is.

When I talked to Greg Livingstone in London and told him what I was interested in, he said, Do you have a team that's ready to go to an Islamic city and plant a church?

I said, No. He says, Well, I don't usually go anywhere unless there's a team in preparation. And I says, Well, that's why we need somebody to come preach to us. We are just starting to get a burden for that part of the world.

[4:43] And he said, Well, I'm willing to think and pray about it. He said, I want you to pray about it. If I do come, I need you to commit to me that you will talk to sister churches and that you will ask them to seriously pray that God will put together a team from several of your sister churches to go and plant a church in an Islamic city.

He said, If you won't commit yourself to doing that, he said, I don't mean to be rude, but I'm not going to come. I'm older in life, and I have to use my time well. And then the third time I talked to him, he said one more thing that's necessary.

If you will let me have a luncheon with just the pastors during that conference, then I will come. So it was very sobering. It's sort of like Pastor John said.

We all want to attend a missions conference and pray for missions and get excited about it. that if you really knew that God was going to call you to go to an unsafe place for the sake of His name, would you be excited?

I have to admit to you that there's a principle of fear in my heart that still resides there, that that would really give me pause or to think that my children may go there.

[6:05] But missions is serious, and God's glory warrants that seriousness. So I just wanted you to know that's how seriously one of these speakers is taking his trip to the States with regard to this missions conference.

Now, what I would like to do this evening is talk to you about prayer. I want to help you in an area that I think will contribute to the health and the well-being of Grace Fellowship Church for the future that we've talked about.

I can only confess to you that in Owensboro, we do not pray as we ought. We are troubled about how poor and how weak and anemic our corporate praying is as well as our private praying.

And we're trying to address that because we believe that a praying church, a church that's very serious about prayer, is a healthy church.

And so I want to leave you tonight with an exhortation and an encouragement to become even more of a praying church than you presently are.

[7:27] And I have a very narrow focus of interest tonight in my treatment of this subject. I don't want to preach or teach on prayer in general.

I want to preach on a particular aspect of prayer. And I will put that in context for you right now. This is my own fallible, I'm sure, and deficient definition of prayer.

prayer. I just submit it to you so that you can see that there are four elements in prayer. And it is one of them that I want us to think about tonight.

I have defined prayer in the following way. It is coming, and this is going to be hard to write down, so if you want to just get the big highlights. It is coming by faith into the presence of God in the name of Jesus and by the help of the Holy Spirit to humbly confess our sins, to joyfully adore His majesty, to sincerely thank Him for His kindness, and to fervently petition Him for His grace and mercy, for those things we believe to be in accord with His revealed will and mercy, or His revealed will, and if granted, would bring Him glory.

I didn't try to make it sound like a Puritan definition, but I think it kind of ends up sounding like that. Would you just think about this? We know that it's coming into the presence of God by faith through Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit.

[9:08] We all know that. But there are four things that we do when we pray. We don't do them all every time we pray, and we're not obligated to do them all every time we pray.

But it's hard for me to think of anything left out of prayer when I give you these four categories. It is confessing our sins. It is adoring His majesty.

It is thanking Him for His kindness, and it is petitioning Him for His grace. So you have confession, adoration, thanksgiving, and petition.

Sometimes we just confess our sins. Sometimes we come before God to do nothing but to adore His majesty. When is the last time you prayed to God and didn't ask Him for anything?

You just said, I want to come into your presence, God, and I want to adore you for those qualities and perfections of your character that make you so glorious.

[10 : 13] When is the last time you went into the presence of God to do nothing but to thank Him for what He has been doing in your life? And yet, there are other times that it's perfectly appropriate for us to go immediately into that presence and to petition Him.

We're desperate. We need help right now. And sometimes we do all of these things in prayer. But these are the four major elements of prayer.

And I want to focus tonight on petitioning God. But, even with regard to petitioning God, I want to focus on a special kind of petitioning.

I want to focus on that kind of petitioning of God which results in what we would have to call miraculous or supernatural divine interventions.

Interventions by God of an extraordinary sort. And we pray and God answers our prayers frequently, if not continually.

[11 : 21] And we know He was involved. But I'm talking about petitioning Him for those things which are truly impossible and seem out of the question.

Which, if answered, we just have to just stand back and say, it is amazing. God broke into this situation in an extraordinary, miraculous, supernatural kind of way.

I think we're afraid to pray that way because I think, first of all, we know that we don't possess the kind of faith that it takes to pray that way.

And I think that we as Reformed people in particular maybe struggle with that because we, by nature, quickly default to God's sovereignty.

When we have an impossible situation or a seemingly impossible situation, we pray about it for a few times and then we just say, well, God is sovereign. We have asked him and, you know, it says in James, you have not because you ask not.

[12 : 26] We asked. And after all, Paul only prayed three times for the removal of the thorn of his flesh. So let's just humbly submit to God's sovereignty.

And I think we do that too quickly, too naturally. it becomes the default position for us, God's sovereignty.

And I know that we do have to do that. When we plead with God continually for things that he doesn't seem pleased to give us, we must find rest on that bedrock.

But what I'm saying to you folks and what I've said to our people is I think we get there too quickly. We default to that too quickly. And I think we don't have the kinds of answers to our prayers often because we have not petitioned God with the kind of petitioning that will be required to have those kinds of answers.

So, I'm not talking about prayer in general. I'm talking about petitioning. I'm not talking about petitioning in general. I'm talking about petitioning God for things which seem to be impossible and which, if he answers, we will have to say it was an extraordinary, divine, supernatural answer from God.

[13 : 52] And the question I want to raise for you is what are the essential elements for that kind of petitioning? And I submit to you that there are four things that are necessary for that kind of petitioning.

And here they are. Faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance. Faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance.

Now, I can't develop these the way I would like to develop them. This is going to be a very kind of summary overview of these matters.

I would like to preach a sermon or two or three just on faith. We are told by the writer to the Hebrews that without faith it is impossible to please him, God, for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And I want to focus on faith for just a few minutes. And I think here, and maybe I should just speak for myself and not assume that you're guilty of this, for me, as a reformed Christian, I find myself satisfied with my total persuasion that God is able to do whatever I ask him to do.

[15 : 16] I say, yeah, I have complete faith in God. He's omnipotent. He's sovereign. He's omniscient. He can do anything. I'm fully persuaded.

He can do anything. The God who can speak something into existence out of nothing can do anything. The God who can raise the dead can do anything. So I'm absolutely persuaded. And my faith is very, very strong in God's ability.

And I think that that's where I find some consolation in my conscience. Say, well, you're doing pretty good on faith. You've got a high view of God.

But what about faith defined as an inward subjective persuasion of God's willingness to do what you're asking Him to do?

You say, well, we don't know about His willingness until we ask Him. And then we're off the hook on that one. But isn't there scriptural warrant for us to come to God frequently and say, God, surely, surely this is in accordance with Your will.

[16:36] It's impossible for me to believe, God, that You are not interested in doing this. I know that You may not, and I know that You have the prerogative not to do it.

But God, for me, faith is more than just believing You are able. There is something in my soul that persuades me that You are able to do this and willing to do this, and I'm going to ask You to do it, because I think You are going to do it.

I'm going to expect You to do this. I'm not going to be presumptuous, but I'm going to expect You to do this, and if you don't do this, I will be surprised. I won't be angry. I won't lose my faith.

I will still bow down, but I'm going to be surprised, God, if You don't do this. Do we have that kind of faith? Do we have scriptural warrant to have that kind of faith?

I want to just quickly show you a couple of passages. One is Matthew 17. Actually, let's just look at Matthew 21 instead.

[17:37] I have so many passages and I just have to be selective. Let's just quickly go to Matthew 21. And I want you to notice the words of the Lord Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. And this is in connection with the cursing of the fig tree.

I'm sure you've read the story many times and are basically familiar with it. In verse 18, it says, in the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry, and seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it, but only leaves, and he said to it, may no fruit ever come from you again.

And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it, they marveled. They said, how did the fig tree wither at once? Jesus answered them, truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, I want to underscore the words do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain be taken up and thrown into the sea, it will happen, and whatever you ask in prayer, whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive if you have faith.

Now, we can quickly say, well, what that means, do not doubt, it means do not doubt his ability to do it. So, we're off the hook again. Maybe, maybe. But, you know, just back a little bit in chapter 17, you remember when Jesus came down, if you'll go there, from the Mount of Transfiguration, his disciples were trying to cast a demon out of a young man, and they couldn't do it, and so they brought the young man, the father brought the young man to Jesus when they came down, and he says to Jesus, your disciples could not heal him, verse 17, and Jesus answered, O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you, how long am I to bear with you, bring him here to me, and Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly, and the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not cast it out?

[20:02] And he said to them, because of your little faith. faith, not because you didn't have faith, he didn't say, well, fellas, you just don't have any faith.

He said, no, because of your little faith. There are degrees of faith, and if this doesn't mean that some things require more faith than other things, so that we will pray with more fervency and persistence and expectancy than we will in other cases, then I don't know what it means.

And Jesus goes on to speak encouragingly and says, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, I said, our little faith. And he says, in essence, he's saying, let me tell you how small your faith is.

Your faith is really, really small, because even faith the size of a grain of mustard seed is able to move mountains. And notice how verse 20 ends, it says, and nothing will be impossible for you. Nothing will be impossible for you. Now, back to this little phrase, do not doubt in Matthew 21. I want you to go with me for a second to Mark 11 and see if you and I can get off the hook here.

[21:20] Remember, I'm arguing for a faith that believes more than God is able, but often believes that God is going to.

In Mark chapter 11, verses 20 through 24, we have this. as they passed by in the morning, this is the same event, just a parallel account, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots, and Peter

remembered and said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree that you cursed has withered. And Jesus said, have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, there's the same idea, that you could say, well, it means don't doubt that he's able, that God is able to answer those kinds of prayers. He's able, but believes, now listen to this, this makes me uncomfortable, okay, I'm going to acknowledge, this makes me uncomfortable. And frankly, it makes me uncomfortable because it sounds a little bit too much like charismatic faith, which I think in many respects is defective and unbiblical.

But just the very fact that it sounds too much like that, I don't really want to give this very serious consideration. Look what it says. It says, does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass.

[22:57] This isn't about ability. This isn't about believing God is able. This is a kind of expectancy. Jesus is saying this.

You must not doubt, and if you believe it will come to pass, of course, it has to be according to the will of God. Not everything we ask God is going to come to pass because it is not the will of God, but surely this must mean something.

At the end of the day, it means something. And he said, if you can overcome your doubt and believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for him.

Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it. Believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

he doesn't say, whatever you ask in prayer, after it becomes yours, believe that you have received it.

[24:06] Well, that's a no-brainer. Once it becomes mine, of course I received it. What's the order? The order is believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

I'm just going to stop there. I don't know all that this means. I'm just admitting to you that when I read a passage like that, my conscience is smitten with the lack of faith, often in my praying, not faith that God is able, but expectant faith.

I really think God is going to do this. I can't explain it. I have an inward persuasion. Well, that sounds like subjective. Of course it's subjective.

A lot of the Christian life is subjective. Peace is subjective. Peace with God is objective. The peace of God is subjective.

There are mystical and subjective elements to the Christian faith. I'm confessing to you as a pastor that I feel that my faith often is very weak. And in another place, if I had time to take you there, I would show you the words of Jesus where he said in answer to his disciples, the reason he said you couldn't do it because this kind, this kind comes out only by prayer and some of the older manuscripts added, and fasting.

[25:29] This kind. What in the world is that about? It's about certain situations that require more faith than other situations and more prayer than other situations.

So, faith is a critical element in the kind of petitioning that will result in extraordinary divine interventions.

Then there's fervency. We can't just believe. Sometimes we have to just be very, very earnest with God. And what I mean by fervency is desperation, passion, earnestness of desire, intensity of emotion, sometimes agony of soul.

We know what fervency is when we're really, really, really in trouble. We know what fervency is when someone dear to us is at the point of death. Oh boy, can we get fervent fast.

And I know that we can't be equally fervent all the time, but we need to be more fervent more of the time. Our Bibles say that Elijah prayed fervently that it might not rain for three years.

[26:45] We don't have the record of that except in the New Testament. We have the record of him praying fervently that it would rain, but James tells us that he prayed fervently that it wouldn't rain, and I'm underscoring the word fervently.

I can't talk more about that right now. In a minute, I'm going to show you an illustration of it. The third thing we need is holy argument in prayer. Holy argument, what is that? That's where we bring to God the best of reasons to do why we're asking him to do what we want him to do.

Argument in this sense, boys and girls, is not like arguing with mom and dad or arguing with your brother or sister, because that's usually sinful. But there is a kind of argument that God is very

pleased with. So when we say to God, God, this is what we want you to do, and this is why we want you to do it, because your word says this, and we believe that if you do this, this is going to bring glory to you.

This is a good thing to do. This family needs a mother. This husband needs a wife. This woman has a ministry in our church. We believe that she is extending the kingdom of God.

We need you to save her life, God. haven't you said? And then quote some scripture. That's what holy argument is about. And Job said in chapter 23 and verse 4, Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even into his seat.

[28:03] I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. Now, I think once Job got that opportunity, he couldn't fill his mouth with anything.

He just had to put his hand over his mouth. But the fact is, there are times that it's very, very appropriate for us to come into the presence of God, make our case, and fill our mouth with holy arguments, biblical arguments.

God loves it. That's why Pastor John read the passage. He may have wondered because he didn't know what I was preaching. You may have wondered, what's he going to preach on tonight? Is he going to preach on the proneness of man to fall into idolatry?

That's an amazing story. To think that Aaron would get involved with something like that while his brother is up on the mountain, it's incredible. But that wasn't the burden of my heart.

I wanted Pastor John to read the passage because when Moses responded to God, God says, go down there. I'm done with these people, your people, I'm done with them, these people you brought out of Egypt, I'm going to destroy them.

[29:10] I want you to leave me alone, Moses. I'm going to destroy them and we're going to make a new nation. And Moses prays and in essence he fills his mouth with holy arguments and he says, excuse me, excuse me God, whose people?

Did I hear you say my people? I believe they're your people. You brought them out of the land of Egypt. And God, you can't do this because if you do, you'll be violating your own word.

Don't you remember? Would you dare to ask God to remember something? Moses did. He said, remember something God, remember you promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that you were going to multiply their seed like the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore.

And if you do this, the Egyptians, they're going to say, there's the real Jehovah, now you see what Jehovah's like. He told his people that he wanted them to sacrifice to him and to go out in the wilderness so that they could sacrifice to him and what he really wanted to do was sacrifice them.

Moses is saying, God, you can't do this. You can't do this, God. You can't do this. And it's interesting that God says to Moses before he prays, leave me alone, Moses, and I'm going to destroy these people.

[30:32] I don't know if you've ever thought about that, but that was a great inducement to pray. Leave me alone. When he said leave me alone, what he was really saying is don't leave me alone. And if you don't understand that, just think about that.

When God said to Moses, leave me alone, Moses, I'm going to destroy this people, in essence, he was saying, if you don't leave me alone, I'm not going to be able to do it. If you pray, Moses, I know what's going to happen.

Of course, this was all in his decreed will, and he knew Moses was going to pray, and he knew what he was going to do all along, but he did it through that prayer. So it was Moses using holy argument.

That's what holy argument is. And then the last element that we need to incorporate, and then I'm going to show you two illustrations. So when a pastor uses the word the last, it sort of sounds like, whoa, it's almost over.

Mom, this is great. The last element, faith, fervency, holy argument, is perseverance. We have to keep asking for those things that we believe would redound to God's glory.

[31:33] And Jesus taught a parable to that in Luke 18 about the importunate widow, and he says that Jesus told them this parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to lose heart.

And you remember the story, the widow just kept coming to the unjust judge. She just kept coming to him. She wouldn't leave him alone and finally says, I'm tired of this. And it's an argument from the lesser to the greater.

God doesn't get tired, but he, this man, if you can prevail with a sinful man by being persistent, says Jesus, think how you can prevail with God by being persistent.

Don't quit praying so soon. Don't default to the sovereignty of God so quickly. Don't say, well, God is a sovereign God. We prayed and God didn't heal her, so it's just probably his will not to heal her. Maybe it's his will that you fast and pray and seek God seriously. Maybe God is doing something in your corporate prayer life through this challenge.

[32:37] Don't default too quickly to the sovereignty of God. That's my point. So, faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance. Those are the essential ingredients in the kind of petitioning that will result, when God is pleased, in extraordinary interventions.

things. Now, I just have time to show you a couple of illustrations, and then I'm going to draw some applications and quit.

I want to show you one from the Old Testament, and I want to show you one from the New Testament. Now, we already had one from the Old Testament. That's why I had Pastor John read that passage. Moses. Moses was fervent.

Moses obviously had faith. Moses was fervent. Moses used holy argument. He didn't have to persevere because God relented. It's the word that was used. The Old King James says God changed his mind, which he really didn't change his mind, but he wants us to think of it in those terms.

So, we have one illustration. Another illustration is Hezekiah. Remember when Hezekiah got the telegram from Sennacherib, and it looked pretty bad, and he takes the telegram into the inner chamber, and he spreads the letter out before God, and he prays in an amazing way.

[33:57] We just don't have time to look at it. It's in 2 Kings. It's also recorded in 2 Chronicles, and it's recorded in Isaiah. One of the great, great prayers of the Old Testament filled with holy argument, and the essence was, God, these people need to know who the true and the living God is, and you must respond, and you need to do this for the sake of your own name and for the sake of your own glory.

It was a great prayer utilizing a holy argument, fervency, and faith. But I want to show you one other Old Testament illustration, and so I'm going to ask you to turn to Genesis 32.

And this is the case of Jacob. And then we'll look at one illustration in the New Testament. Genesis 32. Remember when Jacob got scared to death because the report came that his brother Esau was on his way to get him.

By the way, when he had tricked his brother Esau, Esau was so angry with him that this is what the Bible says in another place, Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing which his father had blessed him.

And Esau said to himself, the days of mourning for my father approaching, then I will kill my brother Jacob. Don't forget, Esau was planning to kill Jacob.

[35:14] And these guys come to Jacob. And they say in verse 5 of chapter 32, we came to your brother Esau and he's coming to meet you and there are 400 men with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. And he prays. He prays a wonderful prayer in verse 9. And then later, he lets his wives and children leave and he has a night alone with God.

And we read about a different kind of praying in verse 22. Would you notice? 32, 22. The same night he arose and took his two wives and so forth and come to verse 24.

And Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

Pastor John used to be a wrestler. I hadn't thought about this until just now. But I'm sure there are times that he had an opponent that he couldn't prevail against.

[36:28] The other guy was just stronger. But what if Pastor John had the ability just to reach around while he was in this terrible grip and hold and just touch the guy on the hip and boom, the guy's hip goes out of joint?

He could have won every match. And this guy is good. So does this make sense? He couldn't prevail with him and yet he had this supernatural power to make the man incapacitated to wrestle? What kind of power is that? So we'll go on a little further here. And it says, then he said, this is what the man said who touched Jacob's hip.

Let me go for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. He knew that he was not wrestling with a typical person.

And he said to him, what is your name? And he said, Jacob. Then he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. [37 : 31] Then Jacob asked him, please tell me your name. But he said, why is it that you ask my name? And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel saying, for I have seen God face to face and yet my life has been delivered.

Now I want to ask you the question. Who was Jacob wrestling with? God. God. It was a, an appearance of God in the form of man.

It was sort of like a theophany. He was wrestling with God. And when God wants to touch your hip, he can touch your hip.

And yet God says that he couldn't prevail over the man. does this make sense to you? No, it doesn't.

And yet there's something wonderful to be taught here, especially in the perseverance and the faith and the fervency of Jacob.

[38 : 45] Jacob said, I'm not going to let you go unless you bless me. He knew he wasn't wrestling with an ordinary man. He must have had some sense that he was wrestling with a divine person.

And so he was tenacious. He had faith. He had fervency. I'm not sure if there's any particular holy argument going on here, but there's one thing for sure.

He was persevering. I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he got the blessing. He got the blessing.

And we need to learn how to say to God, I will not let you go, God, unless you bless me. Do you think that's irreverent? Do you think God would be displeased with you for saying something like that?

Almost sounds like rebellion. Sounds like who you think you are. You're talking to God. God doesn't have to bless you. He does if you desperately need it.

[39 : 49] And from your viewpoint, he's got to bless you. And I want to read to you what a Puritan said. And when I read this to you, you're going to say, I don't think that's right.

That can't be good. That can't be right. And you need to, when you get to heaven, you meet with Richard Sibbes and say, we need to talk about what you wrote in the Privy Key to Heaven in that famous treatise.

Listen, this is what Sib says. So when Jacob was with God alone, ah, how earnest and fervent he was in his wrestlings with God. He wrestles and weeps and weeps and wrestles.

He tugs hard with God. He holds his hold, and he will not let God go till as a prince he had prevailed with him. Fervent prayer is the soul's contention, the soul struggling with God.

It is a sweating word. It is the sweat and blood of the soul. It is laying out to the uttermost all the strength and powers of the soul. He that would gain victory over God, even that language is just kind of strange, he that would gain victory over God in private prayer must strain every string of his heart.

[41 : 02] He must, in beseeching God, besiege him and so get the better of him. He must be like importunate beggars that will not be put off with frowns or silence or sad answers.

Those that would be masters of their request must, like the importunate widow, press God so far as to put him to a holy blush. As I may say with reverence, they must, within holy impudence, make God ashamed to look them in the face if he should deny the importunity of their souls.

That is something. To put God to a holy blush. And I think if you come to understand that, you will see, no, this is not rebellion.

This is a faith that really gives God great honor and it's so pleasing to him. So, it's a case of beautiful holy argument.

I want to save one other quote here that I may read to you in just a moment. Another one on holy argument. I just got a couple of great quotes. I thought if all I did is share these quotes tonight, I think I'd succeed at least in blessing the people.

[42 : 18] But listen to this. Luther had a friend by the name of Meconius, and he lay on his deathbed and wrote him a farewell letter.

Meconius writes a letter. Luther, after reading the letter, immediately fell on his knees and began to pray. Quote, O Lord my God, no, thou must not yet take our brother Meconius to thyself.

Thy cause will not prosper without him. Amen. And after praying thus, he rose up and wrote to his sick brother, quote, There's no cause for fear, dear Meconius.

The Lord will not let me hear that thou art dead. You shall not and must not die. Amen. These words made a powerful impression on the heart of the dying Meconius, and aroused him in such a manner that the ulcer in his lungs discharged itself and he recovered.

I wrote you that it would be so, answered Luther to his letter, which announced the recovery of his friend. That's holy argument.

[43 : 35] And I think we need to learn how to use that for the glory of God in a way that's consistent with faith and our understanding of God's word.

So there's the Old Testament illustration, Jacob. And the one that I didn't have time to take you to was Elijah. And there you see almost all of the elements, faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance.

You know the contest on Mount Carmel. And Elijah prays this amazing prayer and he's filled with faith. He's asking for fire to come out of heaven and consume something that's all wet.

and he cries repeatedly. Oh, God, answer. Oh, God, answer. Fire falls out of heaven.

Faith, fervency, and he has holy argument, too. He says, God, these people need to know who the true and the living God is. They think it's Baal. Don't let them believe that. Prove that it's Jehovah. And then after the fire falls, Elijah goes to another place and sticks his head between his knees and starts praying and says to his servant, go see if there's any clouds in the sky.

[44 : 46] The servant comes back, no, nothing. Go back and look over the Mediterranean to the west and see. A second time, he comes back, nothing. The whole time, Elijah's got his head between his knees.

What's he doing? Persevering, persevering, persevering, persevering, persevering. He's not going to quit praying until it happens. So we didn't look at that. So there's the Old Testament, and now just one case in the New Testament.

It's a woman, and you find the story of this woman in Matthew 15, 21. This is sometimes called the Syrophenician woman, the Canaanite woman. Matthew 15, 21.

What will the future of Grace Fellowship Church be like if more and more and more this church prays and the church in Owensboro prays the way we're thinking about tonight?

You see how different our churches might be, what might happen, how many people might get saved? And here we have this woman.

[45 : 54] You remember she had a daughter who was demon possessed. We read about it in verse 21. Jesus went away from there, withdrew the district tire inside, and behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David, and my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, send her away, for she's crying out after us. She's like driving us crazy.

And he says something very discouraging in her presence. I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me.

And he pours a bucket of ice water on her. He says, let's see, I've got to find, where's Lord?

Oh, yeah, verse, now 26, and he answered, it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Wow, I'm a dog. He says, I'm a dog. She says, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.

[47 : 04] Then Jesus answered her, oh, woman, great is your faith. Now, there too, you see, there are degrees of faith.

Great is your faith. Sometimes people say, you should never say that he's a man of great faith. That sounds pious.

You should say that he's a man who has faith in a great God. That sounds real pious, but it's more pious than Jesus. Jesus said, dear, dear lady, you have great faith.

Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was instantly healed. Now, the parallel account is found in Mark 7, and I would just have you turn there, and this is the last place we're looking tonight, because there's something I want you to see, which she latched onto.

In Mark 7, the parallel account, in verse 24, the story begins, and there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

[48:09] He entered a house, and verse 25, immediately a woman's little daughter was possessed. Verse 26, she was a Gentile, Syrophenician. She begged him to cast out the demon. Verse 27, he says, let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs. But she answered him, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.

And he said to her, for this statement, you may go your way, the demon has left your daughter. Now, what do I want to focus on here? I want to focus on her latching on to the word first. Let the children be fed first. If you're really desirous of something, you're really hopeful, and you hear somebody say, let me take care of this first, you kind of perk up, say, oh, oh, okay, because maybe when he or she is done doing that, then what I'm interested might become mine. She latches on to the word first. And then you think she'd be totally discouraged when he says, well, it's not right to give the children's bread to the dogs. She says, okay, here's my opportunity.

[49:25] Okay, I'm glad to be a dog. Then Christ look upon me as a dog. But isn't it true that even dogs get crumbs? Then give me a crumb. I'll take the category.

I'm a dog. And Jesus was so pleased with her faith and her fervency and in a sense her argument and certainly her perseverance.

Listen to what Matthew Henry says about this. He says, I thank thee, O blessed one, for that word. He's putting words in this woman's mouth. That my whole case, that's my whole case. Not one of the children? True. A dog?

True also. Yet the dogs under the table are allowed to eat of the children's crumbs, the droppings from their master's full table. Give me that and I'm content.

[50:33] One crumb of the power and grace from thy table shall cast the devil out of my daughter. Oh, this is what Henry says, Oh, what lightning quickness, what reach of instinctive ingenuity do we behold in this heathen woman.

He said to her, O woman, great is thy faith. faith. I wish I had faith like that. I wish the people of Heritage Baptist Church had more and more and more of that kind of faith.

And I'm saying to you for the last time that I think we as Reformed people have a certain kind of faith that gives God great glory.

We understand his attributes perhaps clearer than most people. We have a glorious God who is a sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God. But we don't have the faith that really believes, that doesn't doubt, that really expects God to do this.

And I think that the next 25 years for Grace Fellowship Church, can be assured to be great years if this church is characterized by that kind of praying.

[52:02] So that's the challenge I put before you tonight. Do you pray like that as a church? Do we pray like that as a church? Are our prayers characterized by those four ingredients, faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance?

When is the last time the church here in Bremen has seen an extraordinary divine intervention? Do you think we don't have extraordinary divine interventions because God doesn't do extraordinary divine interventions anymore?

or is it possible that we have fewer extraordinary divine interventions because we don't pray in the way that it takes to have extraordinary divine interventions?

I can only answer for myself. I believe the latter is the case. And I believe that as reformed people, we need to have a greater and greater fervency and faith in such petitioning.

I told you I wanted to read this. It's just what's in yellow. And this doesn't really pertain directly, but I think you're going to be blessed by this story, and I'm going to pray.

[53:22] Mr. Dodd reports that when many good people had often sought the Lord on behalf of a woman who was possessed with the devil, this also comes from Richard Sibbs, okay?

Many people had sought the Lord on behalf of a woman that was possessed with the devil, and yet could not prevail. At last they appointed a day for fasting and prayer, at which time there came a poor woman to the chamber door where the exercise was begun, and begged entrance.

But she being poor, they would not admit her in. Go away, go away, old lady. Upon that, the poor woman kneeled down behind the door and sought God in prayer.

But she had not prayed long before the evil spirit on the other side of the door in the room raged and roared and cried out in the possessed woman, quote, take away the old woman behind the door, for I must be gone.

Take away the old woman behind the door, for I must be gone. And so by the old woman's prayers behind the door, he was cast out.

[54:33] Oh, the prevalency of prayer behind the door. I find encouragement with that. I want to be like that old woman. This really happened. We'll meet her someday.

We'll meet everybody someday, because there's a finite number of people in a place where we're going to live for an infinite period of time. And someday we'll meet this woman and say, did you know there was a story written about you and I found encouragement when I heard it?

Well, may the Lord bless your church in this aspect as well as all others. May he make Grace Fellowship Church a church known for its prevalency with God in prayer.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we do thank you for your word. We know that we've only scratched the surface of what your word teaches us about prayer.

And we want to confess to you that our prayer lives are so deficient and they lack the faith and the fervency and the holy argument and the perseverance that should more characterize them.

[55:44] Oh, Lord, we thank you for the grace of faith. We know that that's foundational and fundamental to these other things. We pray. Increase our faith. And may we find ourselves praying about things that before we just didn't think we needed to pray about.

And may we almost be surprised. May we sort of step outside of ourselves and say, wow, God, I wouldn't have prayed about something like that a few months ago.

Oh, Lord, please grant us that kind of faith in your power. And may we see great things happen. May Grace Fellowship Church be known in this community.

Not only as we suggested this morning, it's a place where people love one another and love you and love to worship and love the souls of men, but may the word get around this community that when those people pray, things happen.

Oh, Lord, may that be true here and in Owensboro and in all of your true churches. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.