

Joshua 3 & 4 "Miracles are True and Important!"

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[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment, please. Father, I ask that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit, continue to pour out the Holy Spirit, but we ask especially that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit upon us as we study your Word. Father, we know that you want us to use the best of our mind, the best of our imagination, the best of our creativity, just the best of who we are to try to read your Word, but we also know that unless your Holy Spirit helps us, we can't really understand it. So Father, we ask that you would both stir up within us good questions and a good use of our mind, and also incline our hearts to hear and understand and receive your Word, that we might be confident in your Word and formed by it. And I ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So some of you know this story. I haven't told it in quite a long time. This was shortly after, so it's a long time ago, was shortly after our second son, our second child, who's also a son, was born. And I don't know, I should, I meant to ask my wife beforehand. He might have been three months or four months, maybe he was a month or two older, but he was a very tiny little baby. And I, we had a basket that we sometimes used. It was really, really nice woven basket and really nice like, like cushions on the side and cushion on the bottom, and it had handles. And we were a bit of like hippies. So we used that and we'd carry the child around the house with it. And for some reason I had to, I don't know, I had to get something or heard something. And I put Jesse down on a, on something that was probably about that high, maybe about that high. And I put the basket there and I went to get it. And I'd only gone about 10 steps when

I heard a sickening thump. You see, Jesse's two year and change brother Tosh loved Jesse. And I don't know, maybe he wanted to cuddle him, but he pulled the basket down. And I come back into the room.

[3:18] And there's his precious little head on the hardwood floor. And he's only three, I don't know, three months or something old. It's like terrifying. And I don't know if he, you know, hit the, you know, the cushion and just sort of slid off, or I don't know what happened. I don't know if he just tumbled and landed right on his head. But you know, I screamed for my wife and we go and we borrow a car.

We were living relatively close to the general, to the children's hospital. We thought it would just be easier. I mean, he was awake. He was crying. They just take off with the car to the emergency at the hospital. And all the way, I'm driving like crazy. And I'm crying and I'm praying. And I'm really mad at my professors at the place I was studying to become a minister. This was in the first year of me, of my equivalent to theological studies. Those three things were going on. I was crying. I was praying. And I was really mad at my professors. So why was I really mad at my professors?

Professors, this story will help make it clear why I was mad at my professors and why you should be mad at the professors as well. So if you take your, your Bibles, we're going to be looking today at Joshua chapter three and four, Joshua three and four. And there's like 44 verses. So I'm not going to read every verse. I'm going to just sort of tell the story a little bit and then look at certain key parts. But it's really good to have the Bibles open. And then afterwards you can say, oh, George, why did you skip that part? Because you know, you didn't want to answer that. Or what about, that's fine. Like I, you know, open your Bibles, have a look. And what's happened just before this sort of a bigger story is that Moses, God uses Moses to deliver the people of Israel out of the bondage of slavery under the mightiest emperor, the Pharaoh in Egypt. And God uses Moses to deliver his people out of bondage and slavery to deliver them. And as a, after many miracles, they come to the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army has had a change of heart and his arm, the army wants to annihilate this, you know, kill a lot of them, maybe decimate them and then take the rest back into slavery. And God does this remarkable miracle in the Red Sea. And then of having the Red Sea part. But then the people of Israel come to the edge of the Promised Land, they look at what's going on in the Promised Land, they see the numerical superiority, they see the technological superiority, and their heart fails them, and they said that they can't go in because it's too hard. And so as a result of that, they wander for 40 years in the wilderness. And most of Genesis, Exodus, especially Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are about that refusal to go into the Promised Land, the wilderness time, the giving of the law and the covenant. And now we come to the book of Joshua, which happens just after this. And Moses has just died, and there's been the time of mourning. And then God calls Joshua, and he's like a nobody at that time compared to Moses. I'm going to bring you into the Promised Land. And I've mentioned that every week, I know there's a whole pile of issues around this, and we'll talk about different aspects of it as they come up. And you're going to go into the Promised Land. And then last week, we looked at the story of Rahab, who becomes a very important person later on, especially for Christians, and her conversion, in a sense, to be the worshipper of the Lord, the God of Israel. And that's what's happened last week. And those of you, if I were going to return to it, there's sort of a very stark contrast, because everybody in the land has heard about the miracles that have happened. And it melts Rahab's heart to want to be a worshipper of the Lord and throw herself upon his mercy, which he does have mercy, he receives her. But the king, who knows the exact same fights, his response is to fight.

And now we come to the next thing, basically almost the next day. In fact, if you're charting it out between the command of Joshua to send spies to them actually entering the land is seven days, if you're like, anal about that type of stuff. And so what's described in the first few verses is he warns people God's going to do something remarkable. And what we're going to do is we're going to have the Ark of the Covenant carried by the priests, and we're going to go through all the whole community.

And the priests are going to go walking towards where we're going to the Jordan River. And you're to follow about 800 meters behind. And the 800 meters behind both symbolizes the holiness, because the Ark represents, in a sense, God's, the Lord's presence amongst his people and his favor for them and his covenant with them. Sometimes they describe the Ark as the footstool of the Lord. So in a sense, you're right in the Lord's presence at his footstool, right with him. And so Joshua says, I want you to sanctify yourself, put yourself aside for God. God's going to do something remarkable.

[8:14] And so the Ark is to go carried by the priests right to the Jordan River. You follow behind. The other aspect of the distance is they're going to be able to see what God does better.

And now it continues on in verse 10. The story continues, verse 10. And it says this, And Joshua said, Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now, therefore, take 12 men, and there, take 12 men from the tribes of Israel, one person from each tribe, a man. Just pause here for a second. There's a whole other thing going on here, like a bit of a taunt, that the Lord is going to show that they might... The people of Canaan might think there's lots of gods. The Lord is about to demonstrate to them and to Israel that there's only one Lord, and that he is the Lord of all the earth. And in fact, if they go to those gods, they're going, in a sense, to the dead, because he is the only living God. And why would you go... I mean, that's what horror movies are all about, right? People start talking to dead

people.

You want to... Why go to dead, the dead, when you can talk to the living, right? And then it continues on. And here's the part of the miracle. And when the soles of the feet of the priest, bearing the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.

And just pause here for a second. So one of the things I'm going to do is just to summarize things. What you're going to notice in these verses that I'm reading is that the author of the text is highlighting or foregrounding or emphasizing that this is a miracle. And not a miracle in a type of hallmark, you know, new agey type of way. Not that there's anything wrong with hallmark, new agey stuff, per se. But it's not like, oh look, every sunset's a miracle, or a baby's smile is a miracle. Well, yeah, yeah. But that's not what they're talking about here. They're talking about something quite dramatic. That literally the water of the Jordan's going to stop. And you're going to know that the Lord did it because the second the feet of the priest step in the water, the water's going to stop. And it's going to emphasize time and time again over these next few verses that a miracle actually happens. That's the claim of the text. The water's going to back up one way. He makes clear that there's no water this way. And he makes clear that in fact part of the miracle is that the entire ground underneath the river becomes dry. Not mud, not sludge, but dry. Listen how it continues. So when the people, verse 14, set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the Ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the Ark were dipped in the brink of the water. And now it mentions something else. Look at this. Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. Now he tells you that this is happening sometime in March and April, and that not only is the Jordan, which normally can be deep at parts, but it's actually flood time. So the water is even higher, and the currents are even stronger. In other words, once again, he's going to be emphasizing or foregrounding a miracle that happens. And by a miracle it means something that nature couldn't accomplish by itself. That's what this, that's what a miracle is in a Christian understanding. Something that the course of nature by itself can't accomplish by itself. It can't be explained by scientific laws or scientific principles. It's a wonder. And continue on, verse 16, the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away at Adam, and the city that is the city that is beside Zarethan.

[12:36] And those, the waters flowing down toward the sea of the Ereba, the salt sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan." Dry ground, dry ground, stacking up, no water this way.

And it's emphasized time and time again in the text that this is something that nature could not do on its own. Now there's something I want to do to help you understand going to resources and understand the Bible better. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that I'm just assuming this happened around the year 1406, and that probably this was written sometime shortly after. But if you look this up in Wikipedia, they will say that George is completely and utterly wrong. Now I know it's a shock to disagree with Wikipedia, but it would say that I'm completely wrong. So why is it that it would say that I'm completely wrong?

What's the issue going on here? Well, the issue is this. It's the same thing that some of you, if you're a guest here this morning and you're a bit of a skeptic, a bit of an agnostic, and you understand science, you would say, George, miracles don't happen. And the longer you talk as if this is a miracle happening, you go down on my estimation, because miracles don't happen. And you see, what happens is most mainline Bible scholars for the last hundred years have an unstated belief that miracles don't happen. And so therefore, because miracles don't happen, this story didn't happen. And if this story didn't happen, it has to have some other type of meaning and be written long enough ago afterwards that nobody can say, no, no, Moishe, that's not what happened. So it has to be written long after, and it has to be something else. And so, you know, they have things about, and you can look at Wikipedia, it'll give you all the different theories. I think they say it's written in the 500s BCs or something like that. But the entire issue, the unstated assumption, is that because miracles don't happen, then therefore, this story didn't happen, and therefore it has to be written a long time afterwards.

Now, I went to an ultra-revisionist mainline equivalent to seminary, and all of the professors that I had there that would have talked on biblical things, none of them would have believed, not a single one of them would have believed that this story happened. In fact, the person who taught the New Testament said nothing in the New Testament happened, including the resurrection of Jesus. To which, because, I don't know, I mean, my wife will tell you the best thing on my headstone will be he rarely did not have his foot in his mouth. Or, you know, George went where angels feared to tread, or something like that would probably be what will be on my headstone. Because I told the professor, why on earth do you think you're a Christian if you don't even believe Jesus rose from the dead?

[15:51] And he said, I can talk to you later. I said, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, I'd be an atheist, or an agnostic. Afterwards, the students, other students thought I was either a hyper-fundamentalist or an atheist. They couldn't figure that out. But that's a whole other topic.

But the thing which was really surprising to me, because I was curious, I'd also taken religion courses at Carleton. They don't base this on archaeological findings, and they don't base it on the actual, their knowledge of the original language in the text. It is completely and utterly an assumption.

Miracles don't happen. Period. Therefore, this is talking about something else. It's philosophy, not their scholarship. And I just want to tell you right now that it is both the glory and the scandal of historic biblical Christianity. They're the glory of it because God does miracles.

He's done them in the past. He can do them today, and he will do them in the future. And there is nothing in Christianity left if you do not have God doing miracles. Every other religion, in fact, most other religions don't have miracles in them. All of the other religions would be completely the same if no miracle happened. But Christianity would be completely worthless. Read Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, where he said, if Christ has not died, if Christ has not risen, our faith is futile.

And we of all people are most to be pitied. It's miracle all the way through. And so on one hand, it's the scandal to other religions and other ways of looking at the world and secular theology. It's a scandal that there are miracles. And to us, it is part of the glory of the Bible. And the entire biblical pattern, if you read what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh and we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, but throughout the Tanakh, there's three reasons why you should be a Jewish person. I mean, apart from the fact that God has his steadfast love towards you. But God, only the living God, who is the Lord of all heaven and earth, only he does miracles or miracle-like events.

[18:10] Only he can prophesy the future. And if you listen to his way, his way of wisdom will shock you. Just two weeks ago, another coffee conversation in one of the coffee shops I go to all the time.

And the guy was telling me certain types of things. And he's an agnostic. And I think he has a love-hate relationship with talking to me. But I told him, you know what? I almost said his name. Bob. That's not his name. You know, like 85% of everything you believe ultimately came from the Bible. Like, where do you think consent for, you know, women having to give consent for sex came from?

Where do you think of the dignity of the human being came from? Like, where do you think science? Like, oh, they like... And he just said, oh, like he was a bit surprised. But the wisdom of the Bible is astonishing. And the Bible alone, by having miracles that actually happens in history, history, then it means that we can disprove it. Now, obviously, you can't prove or disprove this miracle, which happened 3,400 years ago. But it is the proper way. The text says it's the proper indicator. If God is actually able to part the Jordan River, then, gosh, why wouldn't you believe that that God exists? The Lord exists. And why wouldn't you listen to him?

For us, we, of course, have to go to Jesus. 2,000 years ago, but I challenge those of you who are outside, you'll be shocked at how good the evidence is for the resurrection of Jesus. And if Jesus really did rise from the dead, if the stories are accurate, the dead, and that he died on a cross on a Friday afternoon, and was embalmed, and put in a stone tomb, and a rock rolled in front of it, and if on the third day the grave clothes were there, but his body was gone, and he appeared alive to many people to convince them that he was alive, if that actually happened, that changes everything. And why wouldn't you want to know it? Now, when I talk to people about this, usually I don't go right to the evidence, because people have different beliefs as to why they're not going to even consider a miracle happening. For many people, it's just very clear, like if your other religions, it's sort of irrelevant if a miracle happens, so you have to show them why there's some problems with that

religion or worldview. Or if it's more like the average

Canadian, you have to show them how a basic type of naturalism is not obvious, but in fact is highly problematic. It's only maintained as being plausible, because almost all of the institutions of our culture make it, say it's plausible. But naturalism, I'll normally try to go with something, naturalism can't explain the mind, it can't explain free will, it can't actually explain math existing, it can't explain beauty, it can't explain love, there's a whole pile of things, but it, and it can't even explain how life came to be. There you go, cat amongst the pigeons, it can't explain how life came to be.

[21:16] And so maybe you should set those things aside and actually look at the evidence and you'll be shocked. And so see, one of the things about this story is that not only does the story keep telling you about the miracle, but there's two other things which are very important. The first one is this, that it's clear in the language, this is not once upon a time language, but historical fact language.

The second thing is the story is actually highly intricate at the level of the Hebrew. And it's so intricate at the like, like, because it's actually almost like a very post-modern type of story, not post-modern not having any meaning, but it's constantly shifting perspective. It shows something from one perspective and then the next moment from a different perspective and then there's a development and then it goes back to that earlier thing and shows it from a different perspective. And it's doing this back and forward even in the middle of a verse. And so unless you actually look at the text and read it unbelievably carefully, you're going to get confused by the text. And yet this text, with historical language and very intricately written, is maintaining that God does an amazing miracle. And a miracle shows that God exists. Now why on earth was I mad at my professors? You know, one of the things which is very obvious about the world is that just about everybody throughout all of history and all the people throughout the world pray. Pray different ways, but we pray. It doesn't matter if you're a Hindu or a Buddhist, and it might not even really make sense entirely to ask God to do things, but they pray. And in fact, there's been a range of articles over the years of people who are good secular parents sending their kids to good secular schools and never mentioning religion or anything. And then one day to their shock, they discover that their six-year-old prays.

And it's a very, very common human phenomenon. Now here's the reason I'm mad at my professors. They teach their students that miracles don't happen. And at the heart of every prayer is an ask for a miracle. If God doesn't do miracles, it means there's no point asking God. I'm driving along, I'm saying, Lord, heal my son. If he fell on his head, may you heal my son. And at the end of the day, I don't care whether, you know, maybe in heaven I'll find out that in the fact my baby, that my little precious, by the way, Jesse was fine. He's a brilliant guy, has like an MBA and an engineering degree and audiology degree. He's a brilliant guy. And he's completely fine, better than fine. He's a great man.

[24:02] I don't know if an angel caught Jesse's head. I don't know if, like, I don't know if just the the physics of the thing protect, like, I don't know. I don't care about that. I don't care how God did it. I don't care. I'm praying to a God who can hear me, who does things. That's what prayer is.

That's what I do. That's what a real Christian does. That's what the Bible's inviting you to do. And so when you see a miracle, you are getting a reassurance that there is a God, the Lord of all, who does exist, who is almighty, who wants to enter into a relationship with you, who hears your prayers and can act. And my professors were teaching the entire class and been doing it for years, that God doesn't act. That's primitive nonsense. Well, there you go. I am exhibit one of primitive nonsense. In fact, maybe we should rename our church the Church of Primitive Nonsense in the city of Ottawa. The church that doesn't go along with what most of Canada says. Maybe that's what we should say. You want to really be counter-cultural? Come to Church of the Messiah.

So, you know, if you're curious as well, by the way, about the resurrection, if you're having problems with even considering the resurrection, read C.S. Lewis's book called Miracles. It's brilliant.

And then look at either Mike Lacona or Gary Habermas, two of the principal people in the last 40 years who've documented why there is a lot of evidence, surprisingly good evidence, for the resurrection of Jesus. This story has no prayer, but it shows why we pray.

When I began this sermon and I prayed that the Lord would pour out the Holy Spirit, I believed that the Lord could hear me. He wanted to hear me. And in this particular case, I believe he did what I asked.

[26:14] I think he said yes. And that would be my hope for you. Now, why not more miracles?

Now, by the way, I don't know if Uzo is here today, but he was just sharing with me a couple of months ago how he's read Craig Keener's book on miracles. And if you're curious, it's a book which documents ongoing miracles around the world. And he was very moved by it. You can ask him about it when you next see him. But why not more miracles? Well, what happens? The next bit of the story is going to be a little bit all about the rocks. And if you're not careful reading about the rocks, you're not sure if there's one pile, two piles, or three piles, but it keeps going on about the rocks. But here's the thing about the rocks. If you just turn to chapter 4, verse 5, here's why the rocks are important.

Right? Because they want to take rocks out of the middle of the Jordan River. And it's not clear if they're going to be there on the bank, if they're going to be there, they're going to be in the, where the, you know, when the water covers, they're there. It is clear, actually. You just have to read it.

It's one of the examples of the story's time shifting and perspective shifting in a very, very intricate way that you have to read very slowly and carefully to disentangle.

But if you would get to the reason here in verses 5 to 7. And Joshua said to them, chapter 4, 5 to 7, and Joshua said to them, that's the men, pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, Daddy, Mommy, what do these stones mean to you?

[27:59] Bible models asking good questions. Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord when it passed over the Jordan and the waters of the Jordan were cut off.

So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever or a perpetual memorial. So what the text is saying is there's all sorts of small miracles that go on.

One, and I'd say, like, I think I could genuinely say of at least two times that I've prayed and a miracle has happened. But what the text is saying, not that God's not going to answer your prayer and do small things of providence and all of that, it's what it's saying is these big miracles, these significant miracles, aren't going to come just whenever we want them.

But what matters is remembering them. Remembering them. Remembering them. And it's remembering that grows your faith.

It's remembering what the Lord has done and how he's interpreted. That's what matters. And it's remembering not only for yourself, but remembering across generations.

[29:15] Why is Sunday school so important? And if they ask for volunteers, you should consider helping. Because we want our children and our children's children to know the mighty things of the Lord.

That they might have faith. And walk in Christ. And so that's what this text is saying to us. That that's the purpose of the stones.

And if you think about it for a second, Jesus, just before he gets, he knows he's going to go to be, he's going to go pray. He knows that Judas is left to get the soldiers.

He knows that he's going to be captured. He knows that he's going to die on the cross. He's going to be betrayed. He's going to be dying on the cross the next day. And what he does is he institutes a memorial for his people to continue throughout the generations until he comes again.

And it's something which explains what he's doing and even points to the fact that he's going to rise from the dead. And that's why in our services we have the Lord's Supper. To maintain this memorial.

[30:17] And you can tell your children, why do we do the Lord's Supper? Well, because we believe that Jesus died on the cross. He died for your sins. He died to make you right with God. He died so that you would be made right with God and become part of his people, his family.

You get adopted. And we're to remember his great love and mercy and what he did for us on the cross. The cross isn't just about Jesus triumphing over death and destroying death.

And it's not just over his triumph of sin. He does it for us. But every time we receive communion, there's a reminder that the Lord is for you. Jesus is for you. And just as in the River Jordan, they want to be reminded about what's happened in the river.

Because what happened the first time that the Israelites came to the Promised Land. And they're just like us. They're just like you and me.

And they've just actually, I mean, they're not like you and me in the sense they actually saw the Red Sea part. And then they come to the Promised Land and they say, oh, wow, these guys are big.

[31:22] Wow, they have technological advantages over us. They're numerous. We can't go in. And they never stop to say, one moment. Do you think that if God could stop the Red Sea and part it so you walk on dry land, he can't help handle a Gergashite?

And that's the challenge which we're going to see here before Joshua and his people. God is assuring them, I am for you.

I am the Almighty God. I am the Ark of the Covenant. I am your covenant God who wants to be in a relationship with you. And if I can stop the Jordan from flowing, surely I can bring you into the land. Surely I can bring you into the land. And we see another reason, just the very closing words. The stones come, they move around, all of that. Look at verses 20 to 24 as the story closes and we get the meaning of the story very clarified with the last words.

Verse 20, chapter 4. And those 12 stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. It actually says that really they rest at Gilgal, literally.

[32:34] And Joshua said to the people of Israel, When your children ask their fathers and mothers in times to come, what do these stones mean? Then you shall let your children know, Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.

For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over.

So, purpose, reason. So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.

And just a little thing here, the fear mentioned here is a fear that connects sort of awe and worship. It also does have an aspect of fear.

One of the reasons that people go quickly through it is they're going like you and I would go. It's like, whoa, what on earth is happening here? And so there is a sense of a type of fear, but it's connected with holiness and reverence.

[33:38] And next week when we look at chapter 5, it's the same dynamic between Rahab and the king. Actually, I'll just read it. It's not going to be on the screen. Look what he wants to do.

He wants people. He wants everyone to know that the hand of the Lord is mighty. He wants everyone to be able to say woe and actually be in a relationship with him. He wants, in a sense, everybody to be a Rahab.

Yeah, but chapter 5, verse 1, as soon as all the kings of the Amorites, who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites, who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted, and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

And last week I just, I used visible signs. I realized I shouldn't have done that because people listening to the audio wouldn't get it. But I said that the same information leads the kings to put their fists up so that they can fight, and the same information leads Rahab to get on her knees and ask for mercy.

So just a couple of things in closing. As you go forward, remember that the Lord is for you. If you are in Christ, he is for you.

[34:57] It doesn't say that he's going to say yes to all of your prayers. But if Jesus is able to defeat death, and if he is able to defeat sin, and if he is able to defeat all hostile spiritual powers in his death upon the cross and his resurrection, why not have him do things for you?

He is for you. He is for you. And so you should be encouraged to pray. The Lord can do miracles. I mean, one of the miracles that I think happened, I gave a family some counsel about why they, the doctors recommended that there was complete organ failure going on with the fellow. And the family were very reluctant to turn off the things that were keeping him alive.

And I counseled them that, I'll say his name because he's with Jesus. He was a very, very, very, very fine man. And I said, you know, Artie's had a long life. It's not good to keep him alive by machines.

And I finally convinced them. They said, well, you could, you, can you be with us and can you pray for him while we, you know, unplug it? And I said, sure. Now, I believe that when you go to that situation, you always pray for healing.

[36:14] And so I said, Lord, we love Artie. We're going to be very sad when he dies. I don't know what your will is, but Father, even now at this last moment, we pray that you would heal Artie, that we could have more time with him.

I prayed something like that. And I said, but even more important, Father, we know that you can still minister to Artie wherever he is. And we ask that you would prepare Artie to see you, Father, and Jesus face to face.

And we ask that you would comfort people. A week later, he was let out of the hospital. I'm not making this up. They did disconnect the things to keep him alive.

A week later, he was out of the hospital. He lived three more years. Miracles still happen. Pray. Pray for a parking spot. Pray for your finances.

Pray for generosity. Pray against evil. Pray for courage. Pray. Pray. Pray. And I know that you're like me.

[37:11] And that it's you're weak. And you get grumpy. I get hangry. You know, I'm very prone to being hangry. And I get grumpy by not having enough sleep. And all those.

And I know it can be hard. And I know what it's like to think that I have too many things to do today to pray. But what I should really be is like Luther and Bill Hybels has said, I have so many things to do today.

I have to pray. The devil will say, George, you have way too many things to do to pray. Shut up, devil. Look at Joshua. Take the time to pray.

If you're really busy, you need to pray. You need to pray. And I'm not saying this to make you feel guilty. Because I'm sharing with you as another brother in Christ that I have times where it's my constant temptation is to try to get everything I got to get done in the day to get done.

And then at the end, I sort of do some prayers. That's my temptation. Pray for me that I'm a more prayerful man. The Lord has really been pressing on to me that I'm too busy not to pray. And pray that that would continue.

[38:11] And remember that God is a big God. And he shows his bigness and his preeminence by saving, not by crushing. And, you know, he hears everybody's prayers.

He hears the prayers of Hindus and Buddhists and atheists and agnostics. I don't know how many of you watch the YouTube thing's Diary of a CEO. But I can't remember the name of the guy who does it. It's one of the most popular podcasts in the world.

And he's an agnostic, but he's become very Christian curious. And I watched an excerpt of it. And he confessed in the excerpt that he now prays sometimes.

Sometimes it's a very human thing to pray. But here's the invitation. It's a very different thing for somebody to call me up out of the blue and say, I really need you to come to my apartment right now and do something for me.

And I don't know who that person is. I don't know how they got the number of the church. I don't know how they got my email address. And, you know, in heaven I'll find out that maybe I should have said yes, but I often just say no. But if my grandson called me or my wife or my daughter, I'd be over there.

[39:21] So God hears prayers of everybody. But the most important prayer he wants you to pray is, Lord, would you take me as your own? I want Jesus to be my Savior and Lord. I want to be your child by adoption and grace.

And there's a difference between praying as an enemy of God or a skeptic of God and praying within the family of God as day by day, as we pray for each other and encourage each other, while we remember what Jesus has done and we study the Bible.

We know that we have a Father in heaven who loves us, that he is the Almighty God, and he hears our prayers. And just as I delight to hear that my grandchildren have talked to me or Louise, he delights to hear your prayers.

He will not always say no. He will often say... He will not always say yes. He'll often say no and not yet. But he delights to hear the prayers of his children by adoption and grace because they put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray. Let's stand. Father, I give you thanks and praise that I know that you exist, and I know that you hear me speaking to you right now.

[40:44] And I know you are hearing the unspoken, maybe just prayers from your mind of different people to you. And Father, we give you thanks and praise that you hear our prayers.

We thank you, Father, that you love us. We thank you that in Jesus we know that the end of our story is going to be a good end, so that even those times in our lives where the no that you give to us for a season or maybe forever is very hard for us, Father, we know that we are to understand

your no's in the light of the fact that in Christ the end of our story is glorious and good and beautiful and lovely and true.

So, Father, we ask that you teach us and help us to pray. Teach us and help us to read your word and know that you do, you are the almighty God. You can do remarkable things.

Teach us and help us to pray. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. And all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.