

Gospel Shaped Prayer

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, you know the real condition of our hearts. You know those amongst us who are struggling with anxiety, those of us who are actually feeling really good, really pumped.

You know, Father, those of us who have a problem with cynicism. You know, Father, those of us who are struggling with doubts. You know those of us, Father, who are in fact maybe really feeling just very filled with faith and just delighting in you.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know us perfectly, that your word speaks to all of the different conditions of our lives, and that, Father, you love us, that you care for us, and desire to have us come into your presence this morning, and that you desire to give to us, and we ask that you would help us to receive in a worthy manner.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. I'm still so conditioned, I almost wanted to say be seated, because if we were meeting in person, you would have all been standing from the creed, or most of you would have been, and then I'd have to tell you to be seated. Lots of people think that prayer is pretty weak, a little bit lame, maybe actually really deeply lame, and also more than a little bit boring. One of the things I guess in our culture is, you know, you look at something like yoga, or some of the other techniques in meditation that come out of the East, or suggested maybe by psychologists, those things seem to give you a real type of benefit, and they seem, yeah, they just seem interesting, as if they're going to build your power, and just seem like, because they give you more power, so to speak, and are just helpful.

[1 : 44] It seems like if there is any type of religion, or any type of spirituality, that's probably a better way to go, because frankly, for a lot of us, prayer just seems pretty weak, like you sit in silence, and you just speak in your head, and you talk to God, and it just doesn't seem to be, well, it seems to a lot of people that it's a bit lame.

In fact, people probably sometimes wonder, maybe they wonder all the time, I know a lot of people would wonder about those who pray, how do you know you're actually talking to anyone, you're not just talking to yourself, and how does talking to yourself really do anything for you?

Once again, it seems as if prayer is a problem. And in fact, for many Christians, we feel these same things, maybe we don't want to acknowledge it in public, or we have times when we feel with it, and that's on top of the fact that many of us say, not only does prayer just sometimes really seem like you're just sitting in a room all by yourself, talking to yourself, but it often seems for people as if prayer doesn't work, that they haven't had many experiences of prayer being answered, and if there was a prayer that seems to be answered, it's almost always able to be explained as some type of coincidence.

So it's in this type of context that the book of James is going to talk about prayer. And in fact, for those of you who are watching or just trying to figure out the Christian faith, let me let you into a bit of a secret about your Christian friends, is that the text that we're about to read is actually a bit of a troublesome text to a lot of Christians, in that it touches on their cynicism and their doubt and their disappointment with God in the Christian life, because it seems to make very, very, very big claims which are hard to square with the experience of a lot of Christians.

So let's walk towards the text. Let's see what it says. What we're going to do is we're going to read it sort of twice. It's a short text, only eight verses. I'm just going to go through it so you can just see once again what it is that it's saying, what it seems to be saying.

[3 : 47] Then we're just going to think about it a little bit in terms of some of these doubts, etc. And then we'll go back and we'll read it a second time sort of in light of having sort of, okay, those are the issue.

Oh, it says that, really? Wow, it says that, really? And then we'll think about it, and then we'll go back and hear it a second time after we've thought a little bit about some of those issues of our heart, some of those issues of our mind that we bring to prayer, some of the context issues that we bring to prayer.

So let's look. Just by the way, so it's going to be the book of James, chapter 5, verses 13 to 20. The words will be on the screen, but I just want to really encourage you to get your own Bible and to follow along in your own Bible.

That way, if the verse is missed, you can still look at the verse yourself. And it's also just good to get familiar with using your own Bible. And so I just encourage you to do that. And a little bit of a heads up to what we're doing next, because we preach through books of the Bible generally, not all the time, but generally.

And so what we're actually doing is a bit of the both over the next weeks and months ahead. We're going to look at the Ten Commandments next week. Daniel's going to lead us in that. We're going to look at the Lord's Prayer. Daniel's going to lead us in that.

[4 : 52] Then we're going to go through the book of Haggai, a prophet in the Old Testament, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh. Then we're going to do a summer series called Knowing God, looking at some of the main attributes of God, why that is actually very, very, very good news for us to know who God is, because he desires us to know him.

And then we're going to start in the fall, we're going to look at the Gospel of Mark. It's going to be called Simply Jesus. And we'll start looking at the Gospel of Mark. That's where we're headed. But right now we're going to look at James.

So let's see what it says. And it starts like this, chapter 5, verse 13. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Just pause very briefly on that. The word suffering there is really, I mean, it is suffering. It also basically would be, another way to understand the word would be hardship.

Some of your translations, if you're not using the same one as mine, might say that. So it's basically, if you're going through a hard time, whatever that is, and often hard times are also times when we suffer, the advice is to pray.

[6 : 04] If you're feeling really pumped, if this morning you're thinking, gosh, you know, I got in a 15K run this morning, you know, I had my yogurt and my hemp hearts and my blueberries and bananas and just feeling pumped, looking forward to the afternoon, well, the recommendation here is to sing praise.

The heart of both of these, by the way, is that whether we sing words or say words, that a key part of prayer is speaking to the triune God with words.

That's what's being recommended. And it's really trying to say, listen, from the worst times in your life to the best times in your life, there's a way to speak to God. And he wants to, in a sense, I can't remember who said it, he wants to make holy your down times and he wants to make holy your good times.

He wants to hallow your suffering and sanctify your joy. And so that's what it's saying. And then in verse 14, it says, and so that's not as problematic.

The word bit is a bit problematic. The fact that prayer, it's the emphasis is not on trying to create certain experiences, but to use words to talk to God. But it's going to get into it more deeply, some of the problematic issues of prayer.

[7 : 19] Other than once again, the Bible doesn't teach yoga or meditative techniques per se. It emphasizes a conversation with the triune God.

Verse 14, is anyone among you sick? That word also can be translated as weak, by the way, in a very, very weakened, diminished situation.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him or her, anointing him or her with oil in the name of the Lord.

And just, it's a whole other big topic of sermons. In the Church of the Messiah, we come out of the English Reformation. And so in our polity, that's the way churches are structured, I'm an elder.

And now you might look at me and say, well, that fits, George, because you look really, really, really, really old. But I got ordained as a transitional deacon when I was 28.

[8 : 20] And just a couple of months after I turned 29, I was ordained an elder. Back then, I was young. And so it doesn't refer to age, it's an office.

And in Church of the Messiah, there are three people who are elders, myself, Daniel Avitan, who was just here, and Sean Turner. And hopefully, in the providence of God, I mean, Jonathan Kamiri from, anyway, I won't go any further in it, but we're elders.

But the thing in here, which is very, very interesting, by the way, is, yeah, anyway, so we're the elders. So here the command is to call the elders of the church to anoint with oil and to pray.

Verse 15, And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. I'll say it again.

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. This is, we're starting to get into this hard part of the verse.

[9 : 25] You know, the above stuff is sort of a bit, you might say it's harmless. Well, it can't really do any harm if you sit in a room and just talk to yourself. You know, it's still not as exciting as yoga, or it doesn't seem intuitively plausible to us, because yoga and meditative techniques have a, in our culture, have a type of plausibility about them that merely talking to the triune God and invisible God doesn't have.

But here it goes, here's where we get into problems. I know for a fact that there are people of, I mean, I've had friends die over the last couple of weeks.

I know there are people who are part of the congregation who've had a very close loved one died, and probably thousands of people praying for him.

And there are people who are part of our congregation who have prayed for children and not been able to receive children. And I mean, I've prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed about it.

There are many who would just long to be married and worry that they're going to be single forever and have prayed and prayed and prayed into it. There are those who've had marriages seem to break up, those who have struggled with different types of addictions or alcoholism.

[10 : 43] And so to hear a verse like this for many of us is very hard to hear. And we're going to talk about this again more in a moment. The first part of verse 16, therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

Just sort of want you to notice there the pattern of all the verses. I'm not going to say much more about it than this, is that at the beginning I pray for me, and then the next part, in a sense, the leadership of the church is asked to come and pray for me, and here the whole congregation is asked to pray for me.

And that's sort of it, so it's not as, like, in a sense, there's this big call to prayer, both you as an individual, for my own needs, for me as an individual to pray for the needs of others, and for the church as the church to pray into particular types of needs.

Then the second part of verse 16, the prayer of a righteous person has great power in its working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain.

And for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. And some of us will read this, and this is actually a really important verse, which we're going to spend a bit more time on later.

[12 : 01] But one of the things, the way that James introduces this is very interesting. If you don't know much about Elijah, one of the things I can tell you about Elijah is that even though he had periods of great success, and to many of us, like unbelievable answer to prayers, he also had a time of deep fear, he had a time of deep despair, and his despair was so deep that he asked God to kill him.

So in other words, this isn't like somebody who's like always pumped, always doing his best, like always at a thousand percent, his RPMs are always, going full bore, and he's just flying through life and through experience.

This is a man who struggled with human fear and who struggled with despair, even to the point of a season where he was praying that God would end his life.

And James is saying, this guy has the same nature as you and me. And there's a bit of a debate about how to pray this, how to translate this word fervently, but it literally means he prayed with prayer.

That's what it literally means, he prayed with prayer. And it could take, it could be something to show a type of intensity, but it also could be used as a type of emphasis that he prayed with prayer.

[13 : 25] And it's important because for many of us, we might say, well, that's, you know, there's these Elijah guys, there's these George guys and Daniel guys, and you know, I don't know, they

pray and all these things happen.

Somebody just, I was chatting with some street people the other day and one of them, one of them asked me to pray for them and I said, sure, I'll pray for you, but I want you to know that I'm in sales, not management.

And I knew that one of the street people with them was a Christian and he's a really neat Christian who panhandles so he can buy coffee for street people, not so he'll buy cigarettes, not so he'll get drugs or alcohol.

He literally, he panhandles so he can be generous to the other street people and engage them in conversation and I said to this person, I said, this guy's probably closer to management than I am, I'm just in sales and they all laughed.

But the emphasis here is to deal a little bit with our cynicism is think about the fact that Elijah struggled with depression, he struggled with despair, he wanted to die, he has the same nature as you and me, God did a remarkable thing at least sometimes with Elijah's prayer.

[14:34] By the way, to Elijah's prayer that he would die, God said no. God said no. Then just to sort of, just so we can see the rest of it, verse 19 to 20, my brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

So we see a bit of it, we're back to the problem, the weakness of prayer, its lameness, the fact that it doesn't work and the fact that really in our culture, things like yoga and a range of other meditative techniques have an inherent plausibility and attractiveness to them that just simply talking to the triune God just doesn't seem to have as being something that seems intuitively as the way to move forward in whatever this real world is.

And so I'm going to say several things about this. First of all, if you met a human being that could not hear and could not speak, would you say that that human being, I'm going to get in trouble here about differently abled and I, you know, the fact that, just listen to me with this analogy.

I mean, part of the great brilliance of the Christian faith which is being lost is that every human being is made in the image of God and has a dignity and worth and value which the state does not give but states will be judged by God as to whether they recognize the inherent dignity of every human being no matter how handicapped, including the pre-born.

and so don't jump on me on this but I just want to, just be honest for a second, okay? Check your outrage. Just be honest.

[16:32] If you meet a human being that has literally lost the entire ability to speak and to hear, would you think they are in a sense above you or below you?

Like in other words, I mean, we can look at somebody who's very brilliant and wish we could be as smart as them. We can look at somebody who is really funny and wish we were funny like them. We can look at somebody who's unbelievably athletic and wish that we were athletic as them.

Would we look at that person and wish that we were like them? Well, if we're honest, we'd say no. In fact, in Canadian culture, you'd say they were a candidate for euthanasia because you'd probably say they don't have any quality of life.

Let's just be honest. In Canada, you would say they don't have a quality of life and they are the type of person that doctors should be allowed to kill. But what about if you met a human being and this, from the time they were a baby to now, they've actually had no brain activity.

And so even the very, very ability to speak, like, you know, because speaking, you could see somebody who doesn't have the ability to speak and can't hear and you could think part of what you might think is that it's so sad there's a brain, a person in there sort of trapped.

[17:50] And how can you get in touch with that? But if you met somebody and in fact, the brain doesn't work at all. And so it's not just that they can't speak and that they can't listen, but that even if somehow or another magically it could work, there'd be no one there in a sense to speak.

Now, would you think they were greater than you or less than you? Would you wish that you could be like them? No, once again, you would say, I don't even know why they've kept somebody like that alive.

That would be obviously a person that they should have turned off the plug if not turning off the plug didn't kill them. They're obviously a candidate for so-called assisted suicide, which is really just euthanasia.

So the reason I'm asking all of this is that if that's how we view human beings, why is it that a God that cannot speak and a God that cannot hear and a God, a conception of God, that actually it's not even within that God's capability to speak or hear, how on earth could that be God?

And I'm using the word that, like, but that's the God of the East. That's the God of yoga. That's the God of meditation.

[19 : 13] Like, why would you worship a God like that? Why would you even want to connect with it? Like, how does that fit? Why is that plausible to you?

Well, let's ask another question. In fact, we'll just, see, here's the thing about the gospel. What does the gospel reveal?

How is the true God revealed? He's revealed in the person of Jesus. That's the Christian teaching. If you go back and you read John, you'll see that John says that Jesus is the one who perfectly reveals God.

The personal God is revealed in the person of Jesus. The God that does exist that what we Christians believe since we accept what Jesus has said is the God who speaks.

The God who can listen. Shouldn't that be, even if you don't believe a God like that exists, shouldn't you wish that a God like that exists? And shouldn't you say, wouldn't you, isn't it more reasonable to say, why on earth am I actually trying to connect to a God that's less than a human being?

[20 : 24] That's, that in fact, if we met that God as a person, we'd think that God should die to be put out of its misery. Jesus spoke, he loved, he died, he reveals the real God.

Isn't this far better? Or what about if you had a God who for eons and eons and eons from all eternity was completely and utterly solitary? Completely and utterly solitary, just that God existed. And because just God exists, if God only exists, I guess he could talk to himself, but he can't really talk to anybody else. And, you know, when you meet a person, like, we're just off of that, we're in the ministry spaces in the downtown part of Ottawa, where we worship on Sunday mornings as part of the Urban Corps of Ottawa.

Let me tell you, there's all sorts of people that are around here. I see people every day who can only talk to themselves but cannot talk to human beings. And nobody, nobody thinks that's the way to go for your future.

But what if you have a God that can maybe talk, but he can only talk to himself and then all of a sudden he decides to create other beings and then he has beings that he talks to?

[21 : 42] Well, I mean, I'm describing the God of, I just described Allah. Well, how is that like a God that we'd want to actually hope exists?

Like, doesn't there seem like there's something wrong with that conception of God? I know I'm being very un-Canadian challenging our conceptions, but listen, don't we all want as individuals to not live unexamined lives?

Don't we look down on people who live mindless, shallow, unquestioning, unexamined lives? And since that's the case, and I'm fine, I get challenged all the time on my Christian faith, all the time.

So, for those of us who think yoga is more plausible, for those of us who think Allah is more plausible, well, really, is it? Have we examined what it means to have such a God like this?

And once again, the Christian God who Jesus reveals is completely and utterly different from the God, the triune God. The God that's revealed by Jesus is that Jesus is God, the Son of God, that from all eternity, the Father and the Son loved each other, the Holy Spirit loved the Father and loved the Son, the Son loved the Holy Spirit and the Father.

[22 : 59] There is, in a sense, communication, there was revelation from all eternity. And God, who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, he creates human beings in his image.

And so he doesn't just create George, the lone human, in a completely and utterly non-human world. He creates George and Andrew and Rebecca and Louise and you and Matt and Daniel and Jono and Claire.

He creates human beings. He creates human beings to reveal themselves, to know themselves, to know each other, to communicate. It all fits. Shouldn't a God like that be far more plausible?

Even if you can't believe that a God like that does exist, shouldn't you begin to long that such a God like that exists? I mean, I have good news for you.

That longing will be a longing that comes to fruition when you give your heart and your mind and your life to Jesus. Jesus reveals God, and he reveals God not only by living a perfect life, suffering

the trials and temptations, the weaknesses that we do only without sin, but he loves us to the point of dying for us, to reconcile you to God.

[24 : 15] God doesn't just reveal himself as big, chest thumping, look at me, I'm great. I mean, he is great, but he reveals himself in lowliness by dying.

You know, all of the idols and all of the gods of the world, they all have one characteristic, others die for them. Marxism, others die for them, ideologies as well, ideologies, all the gods, others die for the God or the gods.

Christianity, completely and utterly unique. It is the story of God coming among us to die for us because he loves you and me.

In fact, what is one of the names of Jesus? The first name that is given to him is Emmanuel, God with us, with us in our mess, with us in our joys, with us in our sorrows.

He is Emmanuel, God with us. But some of you might say, George, but prayer doesn't work. Listen, I can tell you of the times I've prayed and it just doesn't work. Christians and non-Christians can tell me that.

[25 : 23] A couple of weeks ago I wrote a blog. You can look at it. It's called Amnesia and Prayer. I talk about God dramatically answering a prayer request of mine that I thought was impossible, but I was praying out of obedience.

I talk a few other things about how he answers prayer or not. I suggest you go read it. I just want to sort of double down on the particular issue. Some of you have heard this story before, but it's a good story and I'll tell it again.

I used to be in a rural church. I looked after four little congregations. I can't remember if it was July or August. It doesn't matter. It was the summer. And the way Anglican churches work, especially when you're the only elder in the congregation at that particular time, if you go on holidays, you get another person to cover for emergencies for you.

So the priest in a small village or small city about half an hour away from where I lived, he was on holidays. He asked me to cover for him. I agreed. So at about 7.30 in the morning on a Sunday morning, I get a call from the hospital.

And the call from the hospital is that Bob, we'll call him Bob, is dying. He's been in a coma for several days. They've turned off the machines. He's going to die any second, literally any second.

[26 : 33] His daughter is with him and his daughter has asked that a priest would come and you're the one. Would you come and just give him his last rites and pray over him? He's going to die any moment. Can you come right away?

And I said, listen, I'm really, really sorry. I have to drive all the way to Killaloo, which is half an hour the other way. Tremor, not Killaloo. Tremor, half an hour the wrong way. I have to do a service there at 9 o'clock and after that I have another service here in Eganville at 11 o'clock.

There's nobody to take the services. There's nothing I can do. I'm really, really sorry. And the nurse put all of her manipulative pressure she could on me. This guy is dying.

His daughter is distraught. He's not going to last. He won't be alive at 1230. I can guarantee it he won't be alive at 1230 the early one when you can come.

I say, listen, I have to do the services. I'm really, really sorry. I will call you as soon as I finish my Eganville service and then I will drive. If he's still alive, I will drive the half hour and I'll go see the daughter and the man.

[27 : 33] And so I finish my services. I get on the phone. Yes, he's still hanging in there. She'd still really like it if you could come. So my wife had made me a sandwich and a coffee.

I get in the car. I drive there. I come and I see this guy, Bob, in the hospital bed. And the daughter was understood that I had the services. I couldn't come. She was really glad that God had kept her dad alive long enough that I could be with them.

So, I mean, part of what you're going to learn from this text in James, which is really powerful, I didn't bring oil with me, but I said, is it all right if I touch your dad's hand? And as I'm talking to the daughter, I touch Bob's hand, put my hand on his hand, and I put my hand on his shoulder, talking over Bob to the daughter a little bit about Bob and what was going on in his life.

And, you know, one of the things which this text is so important about is touching the person, by the way, even if it's not with anointing, right? It's one of the things which is so brilliant about James 5, it would be a whole other sermon, is how it respects the dignity of the person, that what you see in this, all this talk of prayer in the elders, is that the person's not alone, that there's a community

involved, that there's no isolation, that the person isn't treated like a machine, that you just sort of try to plug things into and make a readout, and then you just sort of throw things in or cut things open, but they have sins, they have anxieties, they have community, they have all these things, they need touch, they need to be spoken about, all these things are there in this text.

This is not a crazy, this is a text that Canadian medicine continues to need to learn from, that human beings aren't machines, that we have anxieties, and we have things that trouble us, and I remember going to visit a guy, he was, this is early on, and he was deeply troubled, he was in the last three or four months of his life, and he was deeply troubled about the things he had done as a paratrooper in the Second World War, and that's what he wanted to talk to me about as the elder.

[29 : 38] The profound trouble that he had in the Second World War, and what he had done.

Anyway, back to the story of Bob. So it comes time to pray, I said, can you hold your hand, I say to the daughter, can you hold, we make like we all held hands, and I prayed like I always pray in those situations as I learned to pray.

You know what I said, I said, I prayed, Father, Father, I don't know right now if Bob can hear us, but I know that whether or not he can hear us, that you can minister to him and speak to him right now, wherever he is, underneath the coma and the unresponsiveness, you can meet with him and you can speak with him, and Father, we ask that Jesus would come to him right now and minister to him in whatever is going on in his life.

And I ask, Father, that Jesus would minister to him, that if this is his time to die, that Jesus will minister to him so that he is ready to meet you.

I said, Father, if it's your will that you heal this man, I ask that you heal this man. Then I prayed another couple of things, and I said, in Jesus' name, amen, and Bob said to me, thank you very much, I really appreciate that.

The man in the coma said that to me. As I prayed, he came out of the coma. Now, listen, I can tell you two or three other stories, not quite as dramatic as that, where I have gone to administer the last rites.

[31 : 09] I always pray for physical healing. I always pray that they will be ready to meet Jesus. I always pray that there'd be inner type of healing, and I can tell you there are several people that I have prayed for. When I have talked to the family that the doctors were right, they have to disconnect all of the machines, and I have had different people that I have prayed for like that, and they went on like this fellow to live three, four, five more years.

I've had many people that that didn't happen to as well. Probably the majority. They died. What this text is talking about, and this is one of the reasons you want to look at the blog as well.

See, one of the things is that when you pray, Jesus teaches us to pray, your will be done. That's actually in the Lord's Prayer. Did you notice that? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And Jesus, when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he knows that he's going to be captured in an hour or so, he knows he's going to be humiliated, he's going to be beaten, he's going to be whipped, he's going to die on a cross, and he's going to die naked on a cross, and he says, Father, if it's possible, take this cup far from me.

But not my will, but yours be done. And of course, God answers Jesus' prayer not by saying, yes, I'm going to save you all that bother. He answers his prayer by, no, you are going to go ahead and die.

[32 : 41] See, God still answered Jesus' prayer, he just didn't answer it with a yes. That, by the way, that story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is a profound comfort. But it's not a profound comfort if you don't know Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

See, remember when I told you that one of the things which is uniquely different about the Christian faith than all other faiths is that all of the gods of the world have people die for them. The ideologies of the world have people die for them.

The rich have people die for them. In the Christian faith, the God is revealed in Jesus. Only there does God not say, I want you to die for me, but he says, I'm going to die for you.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.

And so when you, you, you see, when you understand this and you understand that you pray that God's will be done, not your own, it's not something that creates a type of fatalism in you that you

shouldn't do anything because God's will is going to be done.

[33 : 55] It, in fact, is as it starts to grip you that the one who teaches us to pray this is the God, is the one who died for me, who loved me to the point of embracing my shame.

He knows my, he knows my despair. He knows how much like Elijah I am. He knows those times and I just want to completely give up and still he loved me and died for me. And it's by being held by him and saved by him that I have the context, the comfort to pray your will be done.

And that isn't something, by the way, that then makes you not want to pray. When you understand the gospel and in the context of the gospel that your will be done, I can pray for Bob that who should have died four hours, five hours earlier, five and a half hours earlier, he should have been dead.

And I can pray for him if it is your will, heal him. Why? If it is your will. The universe explodes with possibilities. It doesn't create a type of fearfulness and a type of passivity.

It is, I can pray for anything. God wants me to pray big prayers. And God wants me to come to him when I say, God, I am so beat up.

[35 : 10] I am so tired. I have such a hard time praying. Lord, have mercy upon me and help me. I'm going to have to watch my time.

I just want to say one more thing. And this is really important. It's one of the things, if you get the blogs, one of the things I get, you get with the weekly blog is something called Growing in Grace where I give a couple of attitudes that come out of the text and I give a bit of a way to pray the scripture text that we've read.

And so that's what you, if you go and get that and a memory verse for the week as well. And so one of the things, this happened to us. We had a neighbor whose brother was very much into drugs. And I think it was LSD that he was doing. And one of the things about the LSD is that, and this had happened to him before, is that he'd have this confidence under the influence of the drug that he could fly.

Like a great confidence that he could fly. I can fly. I can fly. And unfortunately, he decided to act on that from the 10th floor of a building.

[36 : 10] And he plunged to his death. Now, here's the big problem we have with the word faith. Faith, in a sense, is not really about you and it's not about me.

A minuscule faith in a proper object is vastly better than a huge faith in a delusion or a lie.

You might have an absolutely minuscule faith, like the space between my finger and my thumb, is how big your faith is. That if you get on that Air Canada or WestJet thing, that it's actually going to safely take off, get you to your destination and safely land.

Your faith might be that minuscule. But the fact is, it's that minuscule you get on. But it doesn't really matter how big your faith is. What matters is whether the plane is dependable. In the same way that if you have a huge faith, I can fly.

I can fly. I can fly. And you jump off of the floor of a 10-story building and you plunge to your death. You see, the issue with faith, faith is always a word that's about a personal connection of trust into something or some person.

[37 : 23] What is the prayer of faith? The prayer of faith for a Christian is that I have been made right with God by the one who loved me so much that he died for me. This God that I talk to, that I come to, is the God, the same God who defeated Egypt and brought Israel out of slavery.

It's the same God that used Gideon to rescue the Israelites from 160,000 Midianites. It is the same God who worked through Esther to change the mind of the most powerful empire in the world to save the Jews.

It is the same, he is the same God who rose Jesus from the dead. He is the same God that even the lowliest person with the most minuscule faith sitting in their room or sitting in church or sitting here watching right now praying to that triune God, what does not matter is how big your faith is. It can be very minuscule, what matters is God. You are talking to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God.

You have become that, you have become the adopted child of God, his precious possession and treasure through faith in Jesus as your Savior and your Lord.

[38 : 40] He has revealed himself most perfectly by living a life of miracle and of love and of compassion and of pity and of mercy, dwelling amongst us in our mess and then burying that mess in his person as he died in your place, in your stead.

And then he defeated that great enemy that you cannot defeat, which is death and the sin which causes death. And as he bears your sin and tastes all there is to death and rises from the dead, he does that out of love for you and he will come again.

And it is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God to whom we pray. Just, I need to wrap this up.

If you go back in the text, the heart of the text is, at the heart of the text is the two things, the prayer of faith and the prayer of faith at the end of the day, what you are saying is that the Lord's will be done.

The same one that you trust to keep you safe for all eternity, to make you fit for a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity is the same one that you pray about for the big and the small things of your life.

[39 : 45] And you are just like Elijah, he is no different than you. And you can pray big prayers and you can pray small prayers. And what do you need? What do I need? Well, first of all, if you've not given your life to Jesus, there is no better time right now.

The God that really should exist, a God that speaks and loves and communicates, a God that is not a God far away but is present, powerful, active and hidden, always working on his perfect plan.

That is the God that does exist, that's been revealed by Jesus. And there is no better time than die to the foolish plausibility of the culture and ask Jesus to be your Savior and your Lord.

No better time than now. And the two things that we need to help us with prayer, which come out of this, is that when you see that you're to prayer in faith and it's the faith in Jesus dying for you, it's that he has revealed God.

So the two things that we need to help us in prayer, these are things, because I have weak faith, let me tell you, I have weak faith, is begin the habit of saying, Father, make the gospel more real to my heart.

[40 : 51] Lord, make the fact that Jesus died for me and that he is my hope of glory, make that more real, deep in my heart to me.

And the second thing that we need to pray, you see, in a sense, I mean, part of how we grow in prayer is actually just praying big prayers. And you can read my blog and other types of things, but the prior work is actually, Lord, make the gospel more real to me.

And then the final one, and you've heard me talk about this before, but we need to, friends, brothers and sisters, we need to remind each other of this all the time. God is big and you are small and that is good. And the big problem that you and I have is we think the cancer is big and God is small.

We think the Supreme Court of Canada is big and God is small. We think the Parliament is big and we are small. We think big tech is big and we are small. We think our neighbor is big and we are small.

We think our boss is big or our daughter is big or our husband or our wife are big. The problem is big and God is small. And that's what we think all of the time. And so one of the things that we need to do is say, God, help the gospel to become more real to my heart.

[41 : 59] And Father, help me to know that you are big and that everything else is small. And even name it. Say, Father, I have such a hard time believing that you're bigger than the cancer.

I have a hard time believing that you are bigger than the Parliament. I have a hard time believing that you are believing that you are bigger than my boss or my economics or my finances or my romantic life.

Father, I have a hard time with it. Help me to believe. Help me to know that you are big and everything else is small. And you see, to pray that God is big and that everything else is small, if you pray that without knowing Jesus, that's a terrifying thing.

That will crush you. Why will it crush you? Well, because the gods of this world want you to die for them. And so it's a scary thing to pray that you know that God is bigger.

But if you understand the gospel first, that God dies for you, then that begins to open the door to say, God, you are big. Help me to know that you are the same God.

[42 : 59] I'm speaking right now as I walk down Bank Street, as I walk through the gay village, that I'm Father. I'm speaking right now to the God who opened the Red Sea to bring the nation of Israel out of bondage and slavery in Egypt.

I am talking to the one who defeated Midian. I am talking to the one who defeated Persia. I am talking to the one who rose Jesus from the dead. I am talking to you who are present, powerful,

active, hidden, and always working on your plan A.

And I am talking to you as your precious, loved child by adoption and grace. Let's pray. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do this mighty work in our heart, that you would help us, Father, to pray a prayer of faith, that you would help us to pray a prayer of faith, knowing how big you are, your great compassion and your love, that your will, your sovereign will, your good purposes will be done, that even when you say no, Father, it might have to be that we wait until the new heaven and the new earth to see how wise and good and loving you actually were to us, to say no, to see those times you said not yet and then you answered later.

And we'd forgotten that we'd even prayed it and how you answered it, maybe a week, a month, a day, a decade, two decades later. Father, we ask that you deliver us from our amnesia. We ask, Father, that you grip us with the gospel, with who Jesus is and what he did for us.

And we ask, Father, that you grip us anew with how great and glorious you are, that you are present and powerful, active and hidden. You hear our prayers. Father, grip us with these truths. And we ask this in Jesus's name.

[44 : 33] Amen.