

To Boldly Pray

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 March 2006

Preacher: Lisa Pike

[0 : 00] Well, I'm quite glad that there are some things in the Bible that Jesus says we're supposed to take quite literally and some things that we're not supposed to take quite literally.

You know that part in Mark 9 where Jesus says that if your eye causes you to see and you should pluck it out, it's better to go into heaven with one eye than to go into hell with both.

That's Lisa's revised edition, of course. I'm glad that we're not really supposed to take that literally because I wouldn't have any body parts left and I don't think you guys would either. I'm also glad in Mark 10, I think it is, when Jesus says to the rich young man to sell everything that he has, give it to the poor and then come follow him.

I'm kind of glad that he's not saying, Lisa, sell everything you have, come follow him. Although there is merit in doing so, what a great thing that man could have done. But he's not literally saying to everyone to do that.

But there is one part in the Bible in particular that I really like to take very literally. I was reading the other day in Mark 11, Jesus says to us, Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

[1 : 08] Now every time I read this passage or other ones like it, my eyes kind of light up because I'm thinking, so what you're saying is, if I just believe enough, I can have anything I want.

Hmm. I start scheming in my mind all of these things I can have. And I thought one day that I'll put this to the test. I'm going to say it was a few years ago just to save myself some embarrassment.

But I read this passage in my quiet time and I thought, I really want a new car. Like I really do. Maybe a nice new black Jeep in my garage parked right now could be nice.

So I shut my eyes, squeezed really tightly. I'm like, God, I believe you can give me a new car. I'm in. And then I got up and I started storming around my lounge room.

I'm like, God, no, I believe you can give me a new car. I believe, I believe. And I'm like working myself up into this fit. And then I actually did it. I went out into the garage, took my keys, unlocked the door.

[2 : 08] Just before I opened it, I kind of like said the prayer again and took a deep breath and just gave God that moment, just to do the quick exchange with my old bomb with the new car.

And then I opened the door and there it was, my old bomb. And I shut my eyes again quickly and I'm like, okay, God, now, go for it, go for it. It wasn't there.

It wasn't a new car. And I decided that maybe I should go back into the lounge room and open my Bible again and think about how I should maybe understand that passage and apply the text. But it's a nice idea, isn't it?

God is an all-powerful God. He can do anything he wants to. You know, he raised Jesus from the dead. He parted the Red Sea. He even created the world in like, you know, just by speaking.

That's amazing. Surely he could give me a new car just like that if he wanted to. Well, perhaps you've got a prayer like that that you've prayed. You want to admit it, of course, because it's quite embarrassing.

[3 : 06] But I thought what I would do is think about or get people around Doncaster to share with me what are some of those things that they really would like God to answer.

Those kind of prayers. I'm sure you have them, things that you would like that God perhaps might not answer because it's not for the right reasons. But Mike's going to show us a video. You might want to turn the lights down.

What would you ask for? I wonder, as those people were saying those things, whether you kind of seem they're snickering because as if God's going to give that guy St. Kilda in his bedroom or, you know, even \$10 billion.

I'm thinking as if God is going to give that to you. Well, when I was reading this passage for the first time, this is one of the things that struck me and the question that came to me is that why is it that when the believers pray this prayer for boldness that straightaway, immediately, God answers that prayer?

Why does he answer that prayer and not other things like a new black jeep? Well, let's have a look at verse 31 and what happens in chapter 4. Oh, you don't have your Bibles open.

[4 : 16] How about we open up our Bibles at Acts chapter 4. That would be helpful. It's on page 887 and 88. This is what happens in verse 31.

When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. The believers had just prayed for boldness and immediately they were filled with the Spirit and were given boldness.

So why is it in this passage that this happens in such an instance? And how can we pray with confidence that God will answer our prayers? Well, it's very simple and I'm pretty sure that you would have heard this before but we're going to flesh it out a bit more deeply tonight.

The way you can have confidence when you pray that God will answer your prayer is by praying in obedience with God's will. That's the key. That's the key. That's to pray in obedience with God's will for you.

And that's exactly what the believers did in Acts chapter 4. Let me set the scene for you a little bit. Jesus has been crucified. He's risen. He's appeared to heaps of believers.

[5 : 28] And by this stage he's already ascended to God. But just before he goes at the start of Acts in chapter 1 he tells them to wait where they are for the Holy Spirit. And in chapter 1 verse 8 he says this.

Jesus gives them a mission.

He gives them a job to do. He tells them what lies ahead of them. They're going to be his witnesses. They're going to go out in the world and show the people Jesus. Now by the time we get to Acts 4 the believers have already received the Holy Spirit.

Remember the tongues of fire coming down at Pentecost. So they're all ready to go now. They're ready to go out into the world. But Jesus says before he leaves as well in John he says this.

That if the world hates me they're going to hate you as well. This isn't going to be an easy road for the believers. They're going to have a tough time speaking this out. If they've got something against Jesus they're going to have something against what you say as well.

[6 : 39] Well the Sadducees and the chief priests see this amazing miracle take place. And instead of responding in faith like the believers do. This is what they said and greatly acted out by Chris and Matt.

In verses 16 and 17 of that chapter it says. They said what will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them.

We cannot deny it. But to keep it from spreading further among the people let us warn them not to speak any more in this name. Now these guys don't have an issue with Peter and John. They don't even really know Peter and John.

They've got an issue with the message they're bringing. They've got an issue with the name that they're speaking in. Now this happens all the time at school. It actually happens after school as well.

There are different groups that hang out. I think it's quite intense at school. That's why we use that example. But you have friends and then you have other groups that your friends are friends with.

[7 : 39] And there's other groups that your friends aren't friends with. And that's them. You know and there's a bit of hostility between them. When I was at high school there were two distinct groups. There were the country bumpkins and there were the rest of the normal people.

The country bumpkins liked to play footy and drink beer and do donuts in their youths. You can probably tell by the way I'm speaking about the bumpkins which group I was in. Now there wasn't anything wrong with any particular bumpkin really.

I didn't think they were all a pack of idiots. But there was something about that group that I really didn't like. And whether or not you were a bumpkin when you went there, that's how I saw you after you joined that group.

And it was enough for me to stereotype you straight away. It had nothing to do with the people. It had to do with what the group stood for. And I just wasn't into it. And this is the same thing that's happening with the Christians here.

Now the chief priests have got an issue with Jesus and with the message and with the group they belong to. And so they start kicking a bit of a fuss. What this means more specifically for the believers though is the very thing that Jesus called them to do.

[8 : 53] He gives them this mission to go out and tell the world. That becomes under threat. Okay, so Jesus calls them to be witnesses and the chief priest says, you're not allowed to speak anymore in that name.

I want you to stop. Well, the apostles' response is quite amazing. And the prayer that we pray together is what happens in response as well.

They come back to the believers and they basically say to the chief priests, no deal. Sorry, we're going to keep speaking. Is it right to do what you are saying or what God is saying to us?

And they say, we're not going to put up with that. So they came back to the believers. They rush in and they tell them what's happened. And then they pray this prayer together. Let's look more specifically at verse 29 of this prayer.

It is such a bold prayer. We're going to break it down a little bit. Verse 29. And now, Lord, look at their threats and grant your servants to speak your word with all boldness.

[9 : 56] The thing that they were threatened with, not speaking, that's what they pray for. God, let us be bold. Let us speak this word out. I don't know about you, but this isn't the first prayer that would come into my mind if I was in that situation probably.

Instead of going, God, please, you know, look at these guys' threats and enable me to speak your word boldly. I'd be more like, God, look at these threats and get me out of here as quickly as I can.

Because these guys are, they're on a mission to stop this. And they killed Jesus. So if they're going to kill you, then, gosh, I wonder what comes next for us.

Well, the believers pray this amazing prayer. It's such a prayer of faith. It starts off based on the promises of God and what he's done. Let's have a look.

In verse 24, it starts, Sovereign Lord who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything in them. They just start by saying, God, you are so powerful. You are so sovereign.

[10 : 54] You have made the earth. You are so big. You are so in control. You can do anything that you want to. That is such a great way to start the prayer. And they continue. They actually quote a psalm, Psalm 2.

And this is an amazing psalm because it talks about basically the kings in the world kicking a fuss up against the Lord's anointed one, against Jesus.

This is a psalm that looks forward to what Jesus did. But the funny thing is in this psalm, the very next line, which you don't have in this reading here, but it's in Psalm 2.

You can read it. He says, God says, he laughs and he mocks these people. He laughs at their attempts because nothing can stop the purposes of God.

Here are the people standing up to kill and try and stop the Lord's anointed. But God's purposes are so much bigger than that. And that's what they're remembering when they think about this psalm, that God can do anything.

[11 : 52] And he was working this out. It's part of his plan and his purpose. Well, what's the outcome? We've seen in verse 31 that immediately after they pray this prayer for boldness, that it actually happens.

And this isn't just kind of some fluffy request for a new car or money or happiness. This is a prayer that is based on what God wants them to do. God wants them to speak out the word.

That's the commission that he's given them. So they are praying a prayer saying, God, let us do what you want us to do. They're praying in line with God's will.

Well, this is one thing that we can directly think about for our own lives. We can think about this same command because we're called every single day in our lives to be witnesses for Jesus, to be his ambassadors.

And no matter where we're at school or whether we're at work or with our families, that's what we're called to do. And it doesn't change from back then to now. The world is against Jesus.

[12 : 53] There are people who are going to oppose your message. Don't take it personally. It's just they're against what Jesus is on about. But for us, it's not so much a physical attack like, gosh, the apostles suffer some pretty horrific things later on in their journey following Jesus.

And for us, it's not necessarily that we're going to be whipped and that sort of stuff, although who knows. But we certainly get, gosh, we can get bagged out at school. Our teachers can give us a hard time.

I know some of my youth are telling me a story about, you know, having a bit of a confrontation with a teacher after they sort of said some stuff in a debate. And it was like, goodness, it was quite, you know, aggressive.

But it wasn't about what they said. It was about the message that they were bringing. Well, when you pray, guys, for boldness to speak God's word, that is something that God wants to answer.

That is something that God is going to do in you because that is part of his will for you. You can actually have confidence that when you are telling people about Jesus, that the spirit will empower you and help you to live out God's, help you to say God's words with boldness and confidence.

[14 : 03] And we can absolutely trust that. That is trustworthy. But I want us to think more specifically about what it means to pray like the believers in Acts 4, praying in line with God's will for us.

It's a bit hard for us in some ways because God doesn't really say, Ellie, I'm going to send you to Zimbabwe and you are going to become a nurse and you're going to work with HIV, AIDS children over there and then you're going to come back and get married and have three kids and live in this place and do that.

Although God can do that and he does work in that way as well. But that isn't something that we all know. We don't all know what God wants us to do tomorrow. He doesn't tell us where we're going to be in 10 years time.

But he does tell us who he wants us to be in 10 years time. He wants us to be maturing followers of Jesus. I know that God's will for me is to be growing in love, to be growing in the fruits of the spirit, to become more and more like Jesus every single day.

I know that God wants me to daily die to myself and to live a life for Jesus 100%. And I know this because God is actively bringing the good work he began in me to completion.

[15 : 26] That's what he's doing in my life. He's starting, he's started a process and he's going to keep doing it. He's going to transform me. That's part of his will. See, God does have a plan and a purpose for your life.

And this plan for you is to have faith and obedience. And this is where the prayer comes in. You see, the disciples knew that God wanted them to proclaim the word, but they also recognized that they couldn't do it by themselves.

They couldn't. They needed God's spirit to empower them to live out his will. And that is exactly the same for us. We can't do the things that God wants us to do without the help of his spirit.

And we can be assured that as we pray for these things that God wants us to, that he will answer our prayers. If you say, Lord, please help me to be loving towards my annoying brothers and sisters, please, he will answer that prayer because he actually wants you to be loving towards them.

If you say, God, please help me to stop gossiping at school and instead to speak your words, he's going to do that because that is part of God's will for you. He wants you to stop gossiping and to start proclaiming him instead.

[16 : 38] But it won't always be this magical instantaneous thing. In Acts 4, the room is shaken and they're all filled with the Holy Spirit. It doesn't always happen like that.

In fact, this could be a process that takes years. If you decide and pray, God, help me to stop gossiping, it might take a long time to totally get that out of your system. But God will help you. I want you to spend a few minutes thinking very specifically about yourself.

Because I know that in my life, my prayers aren't always in line with God's will for me. And that's if I even decide to pray about, you know, things that God wants me to do. Because there are some things, there is a part of me that I actually don't, I don't want to do the things that God wants me to.

I don't want to live his will out. There are some things that I just don't want to give over to God. And that's the fallen part of us that doesn't want to live in faith and obedience.

We talked a lot about this last year, Euthys, in our Bible study, talking about that battle between the spirit and the flesh. You know, the spirit of God is in us, but we are sinful.

[17 : 48] We have fallen bodies and we don't always want to do what God wants us to. So, you know, why should we really pray for those things? We have these bad habits and these sinful desires that are so a part of us.

It's really hard to give them up. We don't want to pray, Lord, change me. Because that means we'd have to stop doing those things. And that means he might actually take some stuff away from us.

There's a part of us that doesn't want to pray, Lord, please help me to find all of my affirmation in you and all my worth in you.

Because part of us loves the praises that we get from our friends and our family. We don't want to pray, Lord, please help me to stop, you know, caring so much about the clothes I buy or the things I wear or the way I dress.

Because we actually like the things that our friends say to us when we're wearing the latest stuff or doing or bought the newest things. There's a part of us that doesn't want to pray, God, please help me to live as a Christian on the weekends when I go out with my friends.

[18 : 59] Because part of us loves just doing what they do. Going to parties and having a few drinks and just having fun. It just seems like fun. There's a part of us that loves being greedy with our money.

And we don't want to pray, Lord, help me to give it away. Because that might mean he might say, you can't have that thing that you've been saving up for or don't spend your money in this way.

I could go on and on and point all these different areas of our life out. But it's really simple for you to work out what those things are. Because all you've got to do is ask this question.

If God asked me to give up any part of my life, what wouldn't I be prepared to give him? See, we say the Lord's Prayer all the time.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. But we're standing here like this. With our fists clenched.

[20 : 00] And we're saying, Lord, your will be done. But please don't change this part. Or please don't take this thing away from me. Please don't say I have to do that thing that I'm terrified about doing.

One of the common things in high school is, Lord, I really want to follow you. And I want to do whatever you want me to do when I finish school. But please just let me get the end of school that I want to get.

Or please just let me do as well as my friends do at school. Or please don't let me let my parents down with my marks. I will do what you want me to do, Lord.

But please just don't tell me to stop my study or to stop doing things. Because I love doing those things. And I want to do well at school. And I want to, you know, become this thing.

And I want to achieve all these goals. And some of those things are bad. I know that you have dreams. And you have desires in your heart. Things that you want to achieve in life.

[21 : 01] We all have those things. And this is where God's will comes in. Because he actually doesn't promise any of those things for you. And that's a really hard thing to realize.

God doesn't promise that you are going to get into the uni course that you want to. He doesn't promise you that. God doesn't promise that you are going to end up being the person you want to be, you know, once you finish uni.

He doesn't promise that you are going to have a happy, comfortable life for the rest of your life. That is not one of God's promises to you. But he does promise this. He promises that he is always working for the good of those who love him.

So if you love him, he is always working in you to fulfill his purposes for your good. See, praying God's will is one of the hardest things you could ever do.

Because when you pray that, you have to be prepared to let go of some of the things that you just might not want to. Those things that aren't in line with his will. And he might ask you to do things that you never thought or dreamed that you would want to do.

[22 : 10] But you can trust this just as believers in Acts trusted that God's will is right. God's will is perfect. It doesn't matter what cost you pay.

You might have to give something up. And your future might involve humiliation. It might involve persecution. It might involve grief and pain. But that is nothing compared to the eternal salvation that lies ahead of you.

That is nothing compared to what we are achieving in this life by following Jesus. And maybe tonight there are things in your life that you know you're standing here like this.

And you want to pray God's will for your life. And you want to do what God wants you to. But you're holding your fist tightly shut like this. Please God, just don't take that away from me.

Please God, just don't embarrass me in front of my friends. Or just, you know, don't do those things I'm scared of doing. Maybe tonight you need to think specifically about how you speak to your friends at school.

[23 : 17] You might shy away from speaking out his truth because you're scared of what they're going to think. You can pray for boldness. You can pray that God will empower you by his spirit. Because he will.

He'll give you just the words to say and he will fill you with his spirit and you'll be able to speak boldly. Or maybe those things in your life that you just need to go like this with. And pray.

I don't want to hold on to these anymore, Lord. I want your will in my life. And I want you to help me let them go. And you know what those things are. I'm going to pray, play a song on a CD.

This is just an opportunity for you to spend some time thinking about this. And spend some time thinking about what are the prayers that are hard for you to pray? What are those things that you don't really want to let go of?

The words are really beautiful, very simple. It's just holy fire, burn away my desire for anything that's not of you and is of me. I want more of you and less of me.

[24 : 20] Empty me, empty me, fill me with you, with you. Such a simple song. And that's really just saying, not my will, Lord, but yours be done in my life. I want to pray that and I want to live that out.

And after this song finishes, there's going to be an opportunity for some open prayer. So if there's some things that you want to pray more specifically about the passage tonight or more generally about things of common concern, then after this song finishes, I'm just going to open up the microphone for you to come and lead us in prayer.

But just enjoy sitting in silence as well. Spend some time with God. Be real with him. Be honest. And just have an opportunity just to think and pray through some of this stuff.

And after the prayers, we'll sing a song together. But let's just listen to this song and do some business with God.

God. Volume 1. Yeah.

[25 : 26] Movement 2. Think of the music with God. Video one. ■brainer. Op object 3. Notice to speakox. Op object 3. Meinung 2. Nice ■ Finanz. Movement 3. It's amazing.■■■■ Tom. Deleteant. Time 2. All right. siinäatal fulfill.

Episode 1. San behöver tane magn ■u né. Deczendoilce. Or your own. Editor number 1.p■■inde■'.