

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning friends, let's pray. Gracious Father, we commit to you the talking and the thinking that will occupy us for the next hour and a bit.

By your Holy Spirit we pray that you will brood over this gathering and grant us the blessing of a right judgment, a real insight, and of the warming of our hearts as we think about our fellowship with you through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Yes, you have already had Olaf Sleymaker identified to you, and that means that I don't have to point him out myself, but I do have to say that when last week's bulletin declared that he was, on the back page, I don't know if you noticed, that he was going to give this talk, it was wrong, and I wondered how many people supposed that it was right.

But no, St. John's, how can I say it, St. John's has his own way of doing things, and it's meant to keep us on our toes, quite obviously. And also, last week, my title was printed as A Method of Grace in the Book of Common Prayer, and it's now corrected.

The method of grace, God's method of grace, in the Book of Common Prayer is what I'm going to talk about. And if in the office they didn't understand it, well, what a pity that they're not all here to listen to me this morning.

[2 : 15] But you can't have everything. I hope that all will be clear, as Bill very courteously expressed himself.

I hope that all will be clear by the time my presentation is through. Still, the fact that the office didn't understand my title made me decide that I'd better arrange my material first by commenting on the terms of the title itself.

Here I go then. What is the Book of Common Prayer? I can answer that very quickly. I am thinking of our Canadian 1962 book, which is a very light revision of England's 1662 book, which was itself a very light revision of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's 1552 book.

I'm not thinking of any of the modern alternative service books that have been produced in the last half century, not just in Canada, but all around the globe, wherever Anglicans gather together.

No, it's a prayer book, as printed, as we have it in our pews, that I shall be quoting from, and I shall be referring, I expect, again and again, to the fact that the wording comes from Cranmer, the wise man who stands as the fountainhead of it all.

[4 : 05] A prayer book, we say, is our liturgy. Yes, so it is. In this book, you have the regular services for each Lord's Day.

What are they? Well, there are two Bible services, morning and evening prayer, and Holy Communion. And Cranmer's hope was that on every Lord's Day, all three would be used.

We at St. John's are used to one of the two Bible services being used, not the other. And certainly every Lord's Day, we have a communion service, prayer book communion service, always at 7.30 in the morning, and every other week at 9 and 11, as you know.

And then on top of that, the prayer book contains occasional offices, as they're called. Services, that is, for particular occasions in life.

Services which, between them, take you, or take a person, really, from the cradle to the grave. There's a baptism service. In due course, there's a confirmation service, and a marriage service, and service forms for use when you're sick, and finally a burial service.

[5 : 31] Well, the waterfront of human life is covered by all of that. Then the prayer book contains Bible readings for every day and every week of the year, and prayers for every week of the year, prayers that are called collects, prayers that are prescribed for use at communion services, but which are just good for life's, for the living of life, as I'll be saying in a minute.

Be alert to the fact that I'm going to draw quite heavily on the collects. That's part of my plan. And all the services now have a certain element in common, many elements in common, but this is the central one.

Each of them is a response to revelation. That is, a response to what God has told us in his word, which we are to hear, and then respond to in our praises and our prayers.

All the services then are responsive. Centrally, they are responsive to the New Testament gospel, which after all is the heart of the Bible.

And the response breaks down into two categories. The spelling out of our needs, our spiritual needs, which are many, and God's grace, which is manifold, which is given us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and which covers the whole waterfront of life, in the sense, I mean, that there is no need, which we bring to God, which God does not cover, one way or another, by his words of grace in the gospel.

[7 : 55] Words of grace, which, as I said, the prayer book picks up and uses. So, we see, in broadest terms, already, we see, that the prayer of the church is to be a response to the gospel of the Lord.

And from that, it follows that proclaiming that gospel and learning it and exploring its ramifications and constantly coming back to God to praise him for it and actually to celebrate before him our expanded knowledge of it, assuming that we've been learning more and more about its riches as time has gone on.

That's the basic frame of the worshipping life for Christians and specifically for Anglicans, and that's the way of living that the prayer book will take us into.

So, from that standpoint, the prayer book liturgy is also and equally, though secondarily, of course, in order, a guide to discipleship, a guide to the path of godly living, a path which in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is pictured so vividly as a path that's there but that has to be found and followed. God has established the path but the careless will miss it. The path has its ups and downs and there are difficulties and dangers to be met and coped with on the way but it's a God-given path of life.

[10 : 05] Well, the prayer book is, let me say, right at the outset, a guide, a full guide and a good guide to that path of life.

Already, the sort of thing that the prayer book is, is modeled for us in the Lord's Prayer which, you remember, begins by looking Godward and celebrating the fact that our God, our Creator, is in fact our Heavenly Father.

That's a gospel blessing. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for real disciples who, through real faith in the real Christ, have really become children of God.

we start by invoking God as our Father and then the first petitions are God-focused. Hallowed be your name which is a way of expressing the thought of glory be to God alone.

Hallowed be your name, may your kingdom come, may your will be done. God is the focus. And then in the second half of the prayer, we are the focus because we are bringing to God those needs of ours, three basic needs, the need of provision, food, and food for the soul as well as food for the body, the need for pardon, as God's children we need pardon every day because we don't get everything right, and protection.

[11 : 56] Every day we need protection, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Evil is abroad, as realists we must reckon with that, and constantly ask our heavenly father to look after us and keep us safe as we travel through what is sometimes hostile country.

And the prayer book follows in the track that the Lord's Prayer opens, the prayer book of course uses the Lord's Prayer over and over again in all the services, and the extrapolations of those services, they maintain the perspective and the as they expand the range of those prayers for ourselves in which make the second half of the Lord's Prayer.

So, we are now clear, I trust, on what basically the prayer book is and what job it exists to do.

We can say straight off with, I hope, clear understanding, it is then a manual for what they nowadays call our spiritual formation, to get us in shape as children of God, responding every day to the grace of God in our lives and being changed by the Holy Spirit into the image of our Saviour, which is how it's meant to be as life goes on.

You can call it, if you like, a training manual, because, as I'm going to say more fully in a moment, the wise Anglican will use the prayer book for personal training, as well as using it to share in public worship.

[14 : 05] I have before me a copy of a sort of a cultural classic.

It's the Royal Canadian Air Force Exercise Plans for Physical Fitness. I'm sure you've seen it, perhaps you address it, perhaps you even do it. As for many, many years, my friend John Stott used to do it.

Was it 12 minutes a day for women and 11 minutes a day for men? The basic exercise is to be done in the morning, in the evening, or in the middle of the day, just as is convenient.

The suggestion early on in the book is how you can use these exercises. Do it alone, at home, at any time.

Have your family work on fitness together. It can be fun. Yes, you know, and family prayer, with prayer book prayers as part of it, is a very good discipline for the family.

[15 : 21] It can be a very happy and fruitful business. And then, going a step further, form your own fitness club, make the exercise a part of your daily or weekly get-together with the girls or the boys.

Well, that in fact is what we do, Lord's Day by Lord's Day, as we practice prayer book worship.

Okay, there's the human analogy of what it's all about, and it's for fitness.

Spiritual fitness is the name of the game. All right. Now, that word grace turns up in my title. Let's focus on that for a moment.

The method of grace in the Book of Common Prayer. Grace, as surely we know, is a New Testament word which is part of the distinctive new Christian vocabulary that the New Testament and the preaching of the apostles gave to the world.

The word, the Greek word for grace, did exist before Christians commandeered it and defined it in the Christian way, but all that it meant was elegance, graciousness, as we would say, and it hadn't got any religious or spiritual content or context at all.

[16 : 54] the Christians, as I say, they commandeered the word and it's one of the big words of the New Testament, standing for two things together which belong together, the attitude of love which our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit display towards sinners, active, saving love through Christ and through the Holy Spirit, and then the word also specifies in the New Testament quite specifically the power of a loving God working in a human life.

One place where you see this is 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verses 9 and 10 where Paul is talking and the first person singular, and he says this, yes, here we are, I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

That was the old Paul. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am. And grace there signifies, as we shall see, both the attitude and action of love and the transforming, empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

Those two things together. You see it as I read the rest of the verse. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

grace of God. There you are, there's the word grace in the whole range of its meaning. Redeeming love to a sinner and empowering action by the Spirit for service in response to God's love.

[19 : 07] And I gave a talk, I seem to remember, some months ago, on the Holy Spirit and how prominent he is in the prayer book.

The rediscovery of the ministry of the Holy Spirit was one of the really big significant things that happened at the time of the Reformation. It doesn't always hit the headlines, but in itself it's just as important as the rediscovery of justification by faith.

And the prayer book picks up this emphasis and runs with it, we shall see that again and again as we move along, the Holy Spirit gives understanding, the Holy Spirit prompts obedience, starting from inside, starting from the heart, starting that is by generating good desires and then enabling us to bring them to good effect, work them out.

And the Spirit empowers when we are confronted with aspects and tasks in the calling of God, which we feel are simply beyond us.

But the Spirit of God, who dwells in us, is given to empower us for that which we thought was beyond us, so that it turns out that it's not beyond us at all.

[20 : 36] By the power of God, we do things and practice virtues which we thought were beyond us. And I need to give examples, you know what I mean by that.

And the Spirit of God all along the line prompts rejoicing its salvation through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And he strengthens us partly through joy. There's a Nehemiah, you remember, who said the joy of the Lord is your strength. Well, if in fact you are rejoicing in God's grace and goodness in your heart, you will have more strength immediately for responsive ministry than you would have had if you'd simply been sitting, glooming, twiddling your thumbs, looking inward, being, how can I say it, mildly and genteelly depressed that you're not, as you feel, a really top-class person or a really top-class Christian.

No, the Spirit who gives joy in the knowledge of God's grace also and thereby gives strength for joyful sins.

In the Bible translation we're used to, which is the King James, the RSV and is soon going to be the English Standard Version, that thought is expressed by the use of the word comfort, which, well, the word masks it to some extent for us readers until it's explained.

[22 : 36] It's comfort in the old sense of strength. If you know any Latin, you'll recognize fortis, the adjective meaning strong at the heart of that word comfort.

comfort, we tend today to think of comfort in terms simply of having a cushion to relax on. Christian comfort isn't like that.

Christian comfort is being invigorated for faithful service, given strength to do more than you thought you could for the Lord.

well, that's the aspect of grace which the prayer book prayers underline and highlight and we shall see that as we move on.

Just one scripture to confirm it. Paul, in Romans 14, verse 17, after his very elaborate exposition of the saving grace of God in justification and then the power of the Spirit in sanctification, he says the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 03] When he says righteousness and peace and joy, he's most certainly looking back to the exposition of God's grace that he's given. Well, yes, we pick up his words and we look forward and we hope that the Lord will enable us.

Indeed, we ask the Lord to enable us to live the life of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ourselves because this is what life in the kingdom really amounts to.

grace. Okay, so now I trust we understand grace and we can move on to the word which probably caused the trouble in the office, the word method.

What am I talking about when I speak of the method of grace in the prayer book? what I'm talking about is God's regular way of taking us forward along the path of life, the way of sanctification, the way of spiritual growth, the way of maturing.

it's a reality which is recognized in retrospect. I mean, you look back over the years and you see how God has led you and blessed you and made you different and different from and stronger than what you were before.

[25 : 38] It can be quite exciting to look back on your life over a number of years and just dwell on the way that God has changed you for the better.

I wonder if you saw the commercial for the PNE. No, it wasn't a commercial. It was a three minutes, four, five minutes slot of what was going on at the PNE. A chap was doing lightning portraits.

He had his canvas up or whatever it was, he was working with chalk. Would it have been canvas? I'm not sure and it doesn't matter. With chalk anyway, he was filling in areas of the canvas.

You looked and you couldn't make any sense of what you were seeing, but in whatever it was, five minutes or three minutes or something, he had filled in this blank canvas and then he turned it upside down.

And you realised that he had actually been drawing, in an upside down way, a picture, in this case, of a rather attractive young lady.

[26 : 55] Well, all right. Retrospect of what God has been doing in what felt at the time like perplexing periods in your spiritual life, can be a revelation in just that same way.

You see what God was up to. You see what lessons he's been teaching you. You realise that he has followed his method of sanctification and maturity.

In fact, the method is revealed in scripture and the method is reflected in our liturgy and that's what's going to occupy us for the rest of our time.

I spoke of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Well, I don't know a better layout of the method than what you see in the Pilgrim's Progress. Some books don't date and that's one of them.

It all starts with light in the heart. Understanding of the gospel is the way to God, the way to get rid of your sin and your guilt, the way to find hope and enter increasingly into life.

[28 : 15] So you move forward. Scripture, which in its own imagery points to that, is 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verses 4 through 6.

Paul says, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

And then he says, God who said, let light shine out of darkness, that's a reference back to creation as described in Genesis chapter 1, the God who said, let light shine out of darkness, let there be light, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ. Glory of God, all that God is and is to be praised for. The face of Jesus Christ, the thought is that the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel and through the gospel comes face to face with us and we have to face him.

It's not a question of knowing that he's there but wondering if he'll notice us. The gospel individualizes so that everyone to whom God gives understanding, shining in their hearts, realizes the Lord Jesus is face to face with them and they are face to face with him and he says, come to me and become my disciple.

[30 : 08] And it's for us to say yes to Christ and enter into life. Well, it begins with light in the heart. Bunyan's pilgrim increasingly sees that.

He embraces Christ. Then he finds himself at once involved in a life of conflict, both inward and outward.

Conflict which he simply didn't experience before he became a believer. The inward conflict is battling temptation from one's own fallen heart.

You've heard me say, I'm sure, that those sin dominates people until they become believers. Sin is dethroned when you're born again, dethroned in your heart, but it's not destroyed.

And it's like blight in the garden. It's still there, marauding, moving around, doing as much damage as it can. we find within us unbidden, of course, desires to do what really we shouldn't be doing.

[31 : 35] So, well, there's the inward battle with temptation the whole time, and the outward battle is with the world and the devil, on top of the battle with sin.

the world constantly presses us out of shape, and seeks to lead us off track, and the devil, who's the ringmaster of temptation, he is there cunningly trying to arrange things so that the pressure on us is maximized, and the unawareness that we're being tempted and led astray, is also maximized, so that without our realizing it, he can get us right off track.

Well, this goes on all through the Christian life. Conflict within, conflict without, or outside. The Holy Spirit, however, is indwelling us from the moment that we're born again, and the Holy Spirit is in us not simply to enlighten us, not simply to strengthen us, but actually to transform our character, our behavior patterns, our habits, so that more and more we come to exhibit the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

By the power of the Spirit, we become like the one that we look at. God's love of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, you remember?

Galatians chapter 5, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, patience, self-control, and when you stand back and look at those qualities that are listed there, you realize what you're looking at is the character profile of the Lord Jesus now being reproduced in his disciples.

[33 : 47] The prayer book, by the way, is very strong on this. The prayer book is concerned from beginning to end with our holiness, holiness, and this is the essence of our holiness, being transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus as we obey and as the Holy Spirit does his mysterious work at the core of our character.

And life itself is a series of demanding and testing situations. We have to cope with them as they arise and just as the devil devises situations in which we shall be tripped up, so our heavenly father devises situations which, if we cope with them in a godly way, are going to leave us stronger than we were before.

As, you know, parents do sometimes stretch their kids by devising situations in which the kids have to stretch themselves a bit in response in order to get the prize that the parents have offered them.

Well, all of this is picked up in the prayer book as we shall now see. The prayer book is a devotional response to this understanding of the method of grace in the New Testament, where it's all very clearly set out.

The devotional response is, how can I say it, diversified, that is to say, different aspects of it are highlighted in different services and particularly in the different collects that are set for the what we call the Christian year, a collect for a week, you see, to be the prayer of the week.

[35 : 52] The collects are all of the requests, one way or another, for virtues, graces, as the Puritans used to call them, habits, behavior patterns, and God's protection and enabling at every point.

And the Holy Spirit, as we shall see, is often mentioned. And if you take a prayer book collect, the prayer book collect, as one of your prayers for the week, and spend a little time thinking through it and seeing the range of it and then coming to pray it with more and more understanding of its implications, well, the work of grace is channeled by that means and will go on by God's blessing in a straightforward way, starting every time in the heart.

Now, again, I have talked to you about the fact that the prayer book always starts with the heart, with desire, with inward purpose, now expressed in action.

Christian life isn't a matter of learning to behave right and then finding that your heart is being brought into line as you do so. Christian life begins from the heart, begins with a desire to get it right in this, that, and the other department of one's life, and the Holy Spirit who generates the desire then empowers for the fulfilling of it, and the collects, you'll find, are all of them formulated in terms of that basic understanding.

And what do we find in detail when we get into the collects? well, I'm now going to list very quickly 12 things that we find.

[38 : 11] I want you to hear me list them all together so that we shall appreciate the range of God's method of grace in the scriptures to which we are now responding in our use of the prayer book and in general in our Christian prayers.

What does the prayer book call for and ask God to enable us for? I've let my alliterative inclination run wild on this, so you'll see there's alliteration under every head.

And the first thing that's called for constantly is faithful faith. By which I mean faith sustained in the heart as a principle of life.

Once one has come by faith to Jesus as Saviour and committed oneself to him as one's Lord, God, well, then one lives by faith in the promises of God, of the Father and of the Son.

One treats the promises of Scripture in the way that one treats a life belt. If one is threshing away in the water, drowning, and a life belt is thrown you, you put the life belt over your head and your chest, put it on your chest, under your arms, and thus you stay afloat on the surface until you can be pulled out of the water.

[40 : 10] Well, think of the Christian as a person who is living in a life belt, being kept afloat in a situation where otherwise he or she would sink all through life until we are taken into glory.

The life belt corresponds to the promises of God, which our faithful Lord will most certainly keep promises of protection, promises of which give us hope, promises which give us certainty as to just where we stand in our pilgrimage.

This is faithful faith as a principle of life. You've got one illustration, it doesn't in any way exhaustive, but it's an illustration of the way in which faithful faith through the Holy Spirit operates, in the collect for St. Stephen's Day, Stephen the Martyr, where we pray, grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here on earth, for the testimony of thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed, and being filled with the Holy Spirit may learn to live and bless our persecutors by the example of thy first martyr St. Stephen.

So, well, that's faithful faith, you see, under pressure, and faithful faith is the fundamental virtue, strength, which the prayer book seeks to generate, sustain within us.

We pray for it, we ask God to give it to us, and he does. With faithful faith goes, secondly, repeated repentance.

[42 : 24] You know what repentance is, it's a halt, right about turn, quick march in the opposite direction, that is, go back to face God, whereas previously you were walking with your back to God and your face turned away from.

Well, that's repentance as a spiritual discipline, and just because we slip again and again, repentance has to be repeated over and over. And nobody ought to complain that there are too many occasions in the prayer book, which require us to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. General confession in morning prayer, a very poignant confession in the communion service. Well, yes, but every time we come together for those services, we have in some measure failed to do everything right, failed in all the service for God that we should have rendered, we have shortcomings to confess and ask God to forgive us for. And then there's, of course, the collect for Ash Wednesday, which I expect you, like me, could say from memory, where we ask God that he will make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord. [44 : 17] that word worthily is used again in a way that's old-fashioned and may make you jump a little bit.

There's no thought of merit or worthiness in the positive sense of virtue in this word, not as it's used in the prayer book, we lament our sins as our sins ought to be lamented. That's what worthily means. And the story is the same in the collect for purity at the beginning of the communion service, that we may worthily magnify God's holy name. Remember that phrase? Well, it means simply magnify God's name as he deserves. So, we pray every time we confess our sins that God will enable us hence forth to live what morning prayer calls a godly, righteous, and sober life. Again, sober is a word there which is being used in an old-fashioned sense. Sober there means taking life seriously as distinct from frivolously. [45 : 42] being serious about one's discipleship. And that's what again and again we ask God to make us.

And repeated repentance is one of the means of being kept serious about our discipleship. It is a serious thing to fall short and offend God. Yes, he's our heavenly father. This is all happening in the family. It isn't threatening our salvation. Nonetheless, we're called to bear the family likeness. And it is a serious thing when a child misbehaves and offends his parents by so doing. Same in the family of God. Third quality, which the prayer book seeks to engender. Growing gratitude. [46 : 47] See the general thanksgiving at the end of morning prayer. And there are other places too in the prayer book where thanksgiving is called for.

The communion service, lift up your hearts, we lift them up to the Lord. let's give thanks to our Lord God. It is meet and right so to do. Well, it is. Actually, one of the signs that one is being helped forward spiritually is that the temper and perhaps also the tempo of thanksgiving becomes a more and more significant reality in your life. The mature Christian will be a grateful Christian who spends more and more hard time in thanksgiving. Fourth, along with these qualities, there is the call to lifelong learning, lifelong Christian learning, Bible learning. The call, in other words, to increasing wisdom and understanding through the scriptures. At the moment, I am burdened by a desire, before I'm whisked away from this life, to make a point which will be noticed far and wide, about the importance of recovering every member, every age, catechesis.

[48 : 36] That is, the basic instruction in the truths Christians live by and how to live by them. Basic instruction in catechesis needs to go on all through life.

St. John's, I am thankful to say, does reckon with this substantially, even though we don't yet use the language of adult catechesis, which I hope that people will be using before too long. But St. John's is very strong on keeping learning from the scriptures. That's right. And the prayer book points us this way very emphatically. Think of the collect for the second Sunday in Advent. Blessed Lord, who caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such ways read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that through patience and comfort, that is strengthening of your holy word, we may embrace

and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you've given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And note this prayer from the marriage service. The secular way, of course, in marriage celebrations is simply to think of the two persons having joy together, but the marriage service in the prayer book reminds us that there is something more to it than that, at least for Christians.

[50 : 22] Lord God of our fathers, bless these thy servants and sow the seeds of eternal life in their hearts, that whatsoever in thy holy word they shall profitably learn, they may indeed fulfil the same, and so on.

The prayer is that they will become faithful learners of the way of God from scripture and will travel the path of faithful response, obeying thy will, as it says, together.

And you remember the collect from Pentecost Sunday, celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit and asking that by the same Spirit we may be blessed with a right judgment in all things and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, that is, his strengthening ministry.

Joy, strength, and a right judgment, wisdom, wisdom for living, which comes from the Spirit's illumination to us, of what's in the scriptures.

Lifelong learning, then, is a further Christian virtue or discipline to which the prayer book causes.

Then, fifthly, there's deepening dependence, upon which depends our peace.

[51 : 55] The prayer book has some telling things to say about peace. You remember that the blessing at the end of the communion service starts there. May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ.

That's the way to the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It isn't only in the communion service that the theme of peace appears.

in, for instance, the collect for the second Sunday after the epiphany, we are given this.

Sorry, I'm looking at the first Sunday. Yes, you will. Almighty and everlasting God who does govern all things in heaven and earth, mercifully hear the supplications of thy people and grant us thy peace all the days of our life.

The thought which is fundamental to peace is the thought that God has his hand on everything, he governs all things in heaven and earth. so it's for us to trust him to order and shape our life situations and when things are difficult, it's for us to trust that he actually is doing that even though it may feel from a human standpoint as if life has really been upheaved in some way and the bottom has fallen out of our world, but if we can retain confidence that God governs all things in heaven and earth, well then the door is open for us to pass into and remain in peace, God's peace, all the days of our life.

[54 : 04] This is what I mean by deepening dependence. You keep telling yourself, God is in charge, he knows what he's doing. So as far as I'm concerned, the heat is off in my relation to him even if the heat continues in relation to circumstances which is very often of course the story as you know.

in Lent there are collets along this line also but clock is beating me I'm just hurry on.

With spiritual dependence and the enjoyment of peace goes heavenly hope which as I said we maintain by dwelling on the promises of God.

the New Testament is just full of categorical statements in which God promises to lead us, guide us and by his power bring us into the enjoyment of glory.

And one is called therefore to live in the present in the light of our hope for the future. Again time presses I have to hurry on.

[55 : 26] Seventh virtue which the prayer book teaches us to seek and ask God for love loyal love to our heavenly father large love to everyone around us and so you have for instance one collect of many the oppression prayer for quinquagesima where we ask God who taught us, who has taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth.

Charity is the word used in the prayer book but love is what is meant and love is what we ordinarily say when we read the prayer on the appropriate Sunday.

Send thy Holy Spirit the colleague continues and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love the very bond of peace and of all virtues without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee.

This is a straight echo of 1 Corinthians 13 of course love. And it's just by being there it's a reminder to us that loyal love to God and large love to all around us.

Love that is in the sense not of a feeling but of a resolve to bring people the appropriate good that you can.

[57 : 13] In the case of God we bring him our praise and our thanks as grateful children should do and in the case of folk around we see need and we seek to relieve it.

Physical need and spiritual need both. So the prayer book teaches us to call on God to give us love. Again there are more colleagues here which I haven't time to quote. Eighth quality Eucharistic eagerness. I was going to read from the exhortation that we never do read at the communion service although it's given to be read at the communion service the exhortation which encourages us to come seriously and with prepared hearts to the Lord's Supper.

Not to dismiss the Lord's Supper as if it's a matter of secondary importance. No, in the worship of God it is of primary importance to remember the Lord at his table and to give him thanks for Calvary and we should prepare ourselves properly to do it.

Well, again, because of the time I'm not going to read that but that's item number eight in my list. Number nine, robust rejoicing.

[58 : 39] Well, the collect for Pentecost has already given us that thought and ever more rejoice in his, that's the Holy Spirit's, holy comfort. And on I rush, tenth, quality, which the prayer book teaches us to pray that God will give us, church-centered concern.

A heart that prays for the whole state of Christ's church, militant here in earth. A heart that recognizes that we as individuals aren't any of us the only pebble on God's beach. church. We are called to be units in the body of Christ, part of the church, and the whole church ought to be on our hearts for concern and prayer.

Church-centeredness was part of the mind of Christ, and church-centeredness is to be part of our mind also. And then eleventh, quality, persistent praise.

I've already spoken of growing thanksgiving. I won't stop and quote anything, but you, I'm sure, could fill in bits of the prayer book which call us to persistent praise, a life of praise.

[60 : 09] And twelfth, rounding off my list, constant communion with Jesus Christ our Lord. When we became Christians, we realize that we are face to face with him and he with us.

Life henceforth then is a matter of walking with him in his presence and in his fellowship. And we really haven't got on track until we started doing that.

And the collect for Ascension Day calls us to that in a very unambiguous fashion. Just one moment while I turn it up.

O God, the King of glory who has exalted thine only Son, Jesus Christ, with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven, we beseech thee, leave us not comfortless, but send to us thy Holy Spirit to comfort us, and exalt us to the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

Exalt us to the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before. What does that mean? It's an echo, of course, of Ephesians chapter 2 verse 6 where Paul is saying God has made us alive with Christ, spiritually we've been resurrected, and we've been made to sit with him in heavenly places.

[61 : 43] Well, the phrase is a pointer actually to fellowship. Being exalted unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, means that we take seriously the fact that we are with him personally in his glory, and we live our life in fellowship with him.

And that's the final virtue to which the prayer book calls us that I wanted to mention.

Well, time is gone, I overrun as I usually do, so let me stop at once, just by giving you one last thought. There are medicine bottles which prescribe daily dosage and also have on them the words, do not dilute.

That's what I want to say about prayer book godliness, do not dilute it. And when we find ourselves confronted by alternative forms of worship which do dilute it, well, let us in wisdom remember that there is a better way.

prayer book so, may God help us through understanding his method of grace in the prayer book to enter more fully into the life of true godliness, true Christ likeness to which the prayer book summons us.

[63 : 23] And so, God bless us all, Amen. Now, discussion, comment, we've still got some discussion time even though I hog a bit of it.

Bill? I've noticed that in some of our counselling courses, they use the word deliverance and they use the word healing.

The neutralisation of the natural heart will be continuing for the rest of our lives. So, really, would you say it's oversimplified to say that it is a sharpening of our understanding of how grace works that the fallen heart is neutralised, consistently neutralised, out of contention with our new heart that we have this constant battle, is one with the effect of grace which we can learn.

Good question, and I think the answer is most certainly yes. The fallen human heart is secular in the sense that ever since the Garden of Eden, it has been pushing God out of the centre in order to put me, the individual, in God's place in the centre.

And so blessing after blessing which scripture refers to and refers to within the frame of our relationship with God, our fellowship with God, God gives us this, that, and the other form of spiritual enrichment.

[65 : 23] all those promises of good gifts from God, graces, godly habits, whatever, they get secularised in our heart.

And so the real force of what's being said is missed. Because fellowship with the God who gives is integral to receiving the gift.

And if fellowship isn't there, well, your thoughts about the gift will be secularised. And then the likelihood is that the real heart of the gift will be missed.

You spoke about healing. Well, there's a great deal of talk these days about spiritual healing, but there are one or two places in the prayer book actually where the healing of the soul is referred to. And the real healing is the healing of the soul when healing of the body is given as well. And doubly so when the healing of the body is given without help from the physicians, as does sometimes happen.

[66 : 44] And you see it as a very remarkable, almost miraculous providence. healing of the soul, that's an enrichment, but the real healing is the healing of the soul, which is the person, healing the person as distinct from simply healing the body without healing the person.

Well, that's, you referred to it, Bill, that's just one example of how this happens. and I just hope that the things I've been saying have come across with the central framing reality of fellowship with God, fellowship with the Father and the Son, as the, what can I say, as the factor that must never be forgotten.

And thank you for your question, which allows me to underline it yet once again. Dr.

Dr. You mentioned that sometimes in life we can look back over a period and be confusing and see God's grace at work. Is there perhaps a collect or something in the prayer book that one might share with someone, who is in the middle of that difficult period and is unable to see the grace that's there?

Well, there are a number of collects and two of them, of course, are in evening prayer collects which say trust God.

[68 : 36] God, he will keep you steady, he will give you peace and he will enable you to handle your situation, whatever it is.

And I was going to read it. Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, from the inside out, you see, as I was saying, and also that by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness.

That surely applies, doesn't it, to the situation you have in mind. And, well, that was set by Cranmer as a colleague for daily use in evening prayer.

What page is that? Oh, it's page 23 over to 24 in the prayer book. And there is another collect that follows it up, comes straight after.

The third collect for aid against all perils is the way it's headed. Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.

[70 : 01] and you might add every other night, for the love of thy only son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Defend us.

There's a great deal in the collets actually about being defended against the various forms of you. Thank you.