



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 16:23-24

“Prayers in Johannine Thought”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours again to consider the great subject of prayer and particularly as it is set forth in the Gospel of John. We thank Thee, Lord, for all of the things that are so rich and so full in their significance for us. And surely there are very few things that are more significant for us than the privilege and opportunity of prayer. Enable us to be responsive, not only filling our minds with some things that we ought to do, but give us motivation to become more prayerful. And thus to fulfill the purpose and plan that Thou hast for us. We ask Thy blessing upon each one present. We know there are many concerns and many problems and many burdens. Enable us, Lord, to learn to pray and enable us to be responsive to Thee in this way. And accomplish great things for Thy glory through us, we do pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now, will you turn in your Bibles to John chapter 16 and verse 23 and 24. And we shall begin with these two verses because our subject in the beginning will be Method and Prayer and this will be the first section to which we shall turn. John 16 verse 23 and 24. This, as you can tell, is in the context of our Lord's Upper Room Discourse and we read,

"In that day you will not ask me no questions. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

Today, looking over some material that I had on the subject of prayer, I noticed a quotation by Donald Bloesch, one of the outstanding theologians today. Mr. Bloesch is a professor in our Presbyterian Theological Seminary in the mid-west. And in one of his books, the *Reform of the Church*, Dr. Bloesch has said, an informed protestant commentator, he has said this, he being the informed protestant commentator, "many Christians today, including theologians, openly acknowledge that their prayer life is virtually nonexistent."

That's probably not an exaggeration. Many of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will probably acknowledge that one of the things that we really neglect is the privilege of prayer. The Puritans had a great deal to say about prayer. William Gurnell, one of them said, "Prayer is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature. It comes into the world crying. Prayer is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing by principles of new life itself." In other words, the evidence of the fact that we really belong to the Lord is like the crying of a newborn baby, praying.

There is considerable debate, however, over the nature of prayer. The simple have thought that prayer was simply communing with God and praise and petition, but the wise are more skeptical. One theory, George Buttrick, a famous liberal minister has pointed out, has contended that prayer is animistic fear; stark fear in the early times and now days only refined fear. It would be true of the history, however, to speak of it as a *mysterium tenendum*, a fundamental awe, rather than as primeval fear. Another theory is

that prayer is an appeal to a personalization of the race. But why should the clan appeal to a nonexistent God beyond the clan? Still another theory maintains that prayer is mere autosuggestion; a reflection of our doubtful thoughts amid prayer. "Perhaps I am only speaking to myself for these four walls," and yet there is no real autosuggestion in such a thing as that. It's not, and yet there is no autosuggestion in it. It's not in man's power to make something out of nothing. As has been well said, Mr. Buttrick goes on to say, "It would be more accurate to affirm not that prayer is autosuggestion but that autosuggestion is prayer." If a man suggests God to himself, presumably that august idea also had its fought beyond the pool of man's own life.

Well, whatever we say about the fundamental nature of prayer, there is a fundamental agreement among Christians and other religious folk that prayer is valuable and important. When we study theology, frequently theology professors say to us "now theology is the queen of the sciences." Now prayer is experiential theology. And so it has been called the queen of experiences. In a more practical vein, or perhaps I should say in a more common vein, Graham Scroggy has written a number of very helpful books on biblical themes, once wrote "a prayerful life is a powerful life and a prayerless life is always a powerless life."

Well, we can add a lot of testimony to this fact, and one of them is a testimony by the apostle of predestination himself; John Calvin, who said, "the principle exercise which the children of God have is to pray, for in this way they give a true proof of their faith."

The other night, two or three Sundays ago in our evening meeting, Sam Storm stood up and made reference to the fact that when Apostle Paul was converted, on the Emmaus Road that one of the things that was said out of his experience was that the Lord spoke to Ananias and told him that he was to go to Paul who had been converted and that he was to do certain things in order that he might really come to an understanding of that which had met him on the Damascus Road.

There was this disciple named Ananias in Damascus and the Lord said to him in a vision, according to Luke, "Ananias," And he said, "behold, here am I, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the home of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul for behold, he is praying. And he has also seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

Ananias was not too anxious to do this because he had heard of this Saul of Tarsus so he said, "Lord, I heard from many about this man how much he did to thy saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who called upon thy name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel."

Now the characteristic thing about the account that is so striking is that the way that Ananias would know Paul is "behold, he prayeth." In other words, prayer was the thing that marked him out. And so when he went to the home of Judas, he would look around for someone who was praying. Now, that's a most interesting statement because it indicates that the fundamental response of an individual to the word of God and an encounter with Jesus Christ is the expression of prayer. Just as is crying the evidence of new life physically in a newborn infant, so praying the evidence of new spiritual life when the Holy Spirit has regenerated a person. So we cannot even speak about a person being a Christian who does not have this fundamental urge to pray. "Behold he prayeth." Is that characteristic of you? Is that part of your experience? Is prayer something that is fundamental, as fundamental to you as crying is to a newborn infant? Well, it would seem that Christians who are truly Christians are going to be praying Christians.

There are two things that are striking about John's teaching on prayer. The first thing is the absence of the common general term for prayer. You look through the Johannine Gospel and the three epistles, you will not find the common word *proseuchomai*, which means to pray. It doesn't occur in the gospel or the epistles and the

noun "prayer," does not occur either. It does occur in the book of Revelation and there the noun is found in a couple of places in the fifth and eighth chapters. That's one of the striking things about John's teaching on prayer. The term "prayer" itself, the common term, most common term does not occur.

Now, the second thing might seem to contradict that, but nevertheless it's true that there is more references to our Lord's prayers in the fourth gospel than elsewhere in the New Testament. And that is not traceable to the fact that we have the high priestly prayer in the seventeenth chapter either. Now, I rather think that this is interesting because I was thinking about this and reflecting on what I would be saying to you tonight. And as I've been thinking through the Gospel of John, because we are studying it in the meetings on Sunday morning and then here we've been studying it here on Tuesday night, I've been impressed again with the great stress in this gospel on the sovereign election of the saints. I think that is rather interesting. Here is the gospel that more than all of the more gospels stresses the sovereign election of the people of God, and it also is in this gospel that there are more references to our Lord's prayer than elsewhere in the New Testament. In other words, this gospel, which stresses our Lord's sovereign election, is also the gospel that stresses prayer, his prayers.

Now, I don't think that the doctrine of sovereign election ought to pose any problems, but there are a lot of people who think that if we believe that God does elect certain people and pass by others, then what's the point of praying. It's obvious that a person who has conceived of that idea is not thinking like God thinks. In fact, it ought to be the greatest encouragement in the world as we have so often pointed out. If it is true that God has elected some people, what an encouragement to prayer. If I think about praying for the members of my family who are not yet in the family of the Lord, one of the encouraging things to me is the doctrine of sovereign election. Now, I don't know that they are included within that company, but I know that some may be saved. That's why I pray.

If I felt that salvation depended upon men, what a discouraging idea. What a discouraging idea that men who are lost and corrupt and condemned and manifest their condition in all of their thoughts and activities, if I thought that the decision ultimately had to be their decision ultimately, mind you -- everybody who makes a decision for Christ makes a decision he can call his decision, initiated by the prevenient work of God the Holy Spirit, but if I thought it had to fundamentally initially come from men, I'm telling you prayer would be very, very difficult. I would not have any encouragement whatsoever. I would be very discouraged. But the fact that God does elect and does save, does initiate the work of salvation, what an encouragement to prayer. I just thought it's most interesting that in this gospel which so stresses "no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him," is the same gospel in which our Lord's prayers are stressed.

Now, the Johannine teaching on prayer is wide and varied, but there is a close connection between the doctrine and that of Christian assurance. So we are going to look briefly at his thoughts on the method of prayer, on assurance in prayer and finally conclude with a word on the example of our Lord in John 17.

Let's think first about method in prayer. And it's generally agreed that the formula of prayer most consonant with the New Testament teaching is that prayer should be made to the Father in the name of the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

Now, you notice in John 16:23 and 24, returning to this passage first of all, in John 16:23 it says and

"In that day you will ask me no questions" [He's been talking about asking questions of them in a previous context.] "truly, truly I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name."

Now, you can see from this statement in verse 23 that prayer is addressed to the Father in the name of the Son. Notice he says "if you shall ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name." So prayer is to the Father in the name of the Son. Now, I also said in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is not stated in the Gospel of John, but that is found in Jude verse 20. Jude speaks of praying in the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul I think stresses that in Ephesians chapter 6. So the proper formula for prayer is to pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, looking at John chapter 16 in verse 23 and 24 -- first of all, notice our Lord dwells on the new relationship with the Father. He says, "In that day you will ask me no questions." Now, that is not a reference to prayer. The preceding context has dealt with questions. He had raised them. And this is a verb that means to ask questions, and they in the New American Standard Bible, which I have before me tonight, that's properly rendered. "And in that day, you will ask me no questions." The next word for ask is not that same word. This is a word that is often used in prayer. The first ask in "ask questions" refers back to verse 19 and the question of the disciples concerning his statement in verse 16; "a little while and you will no longer behold me" and again "in a little while and you will see me."

Now, in verse 19, we read "Jesus knew that they wished to question him." They were puzzled by that statement. And so that's what he means when he says, "the time is coming when you will ask me no questions." "Well, I'm not going to be here for you to ask questions." We cannot ask him questions and expect an audible answer. But he said "you are going to ask the Father for things in my name." And that next word in verse 23, "if you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name," is a reference to prayer. And this makes the point that the Father is the new object of prayer by virtue of the resurrection.

Now, mind you, this was something rather new to them because they were not used to speaking of the Father in an individual sense. Remember when our Lord came on

the scene, Jewish people did not address God as their individual Father. In fact, in the Old Testament, I believe the term "Father" is used about thirteen or fourteen times and never does anyone ever call God their own Father. It's always a collective thing. God says that Israel is his son and so the nation may speak of God as the Father of the nation, but never does anyone say "my Father."

So, when the Lord Jesus said, "after this manner, therefore our Father who art in heaven," that was a startling thing. It's no longer startling because we do that by rote without thinking. Sunday morning comes along, we repeat the Lord's Prayer. You can be thinking about the Cowboy game that afternoon or the Cowboy game the preceding night or about some other thing and repeat the Lord's Prayer, but that was a startlingly new and strange thing; "Pray our Father." So when he said, "Now you are not going to ask me any further questions, but the time is coming when you shall ask the Father," they had heard him say Father. One hundred seventy times I think, he used the term Father in his ministry. See he was introducing something new to them. The Father is the new object of prayer.

Now, that's found in other places in the New Testament and if you -- I think we have time to do this. Let's turn over to Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 18. The Apostle Paul writing here says, chapter 2, verse 18,

"For through him [that is through Jesus Christ] through him we both, [that is both Jews and Gentiles] we both have access in one spirit to the Father."

So the idea then of having direct relationship with the Father is something that has come with the Lord Jesus Christ, and he announces to them there is a new object of prayer. Not simply God in heaven, but the Father.

Now, the second thing that he says here is that this prayer is offered and it is answered in the name of the Son. Now, there can be little doubt that when he uses the

term, "in the name of the Son" he means that he is the representative mediator for those disciples. So they are to ask the Father in his name because he is the representative of them. He is the mediator. And so they are to ask for things in their substitute, in their representative, in their mediator. Our access, Paul said, is through him to the Father. Nobody can come to the Father. Bailey Smith said God doesn't answer the prayers of Jews. I assume that what he meant was unbelieving Jews. Well, he doesn't answer the prayers of unbelieving Gentiles either, except the prayer for salvation initiated by him, in his own sovereign grace. So we come through a mediator. We come through Christ. We are to ask through his name. That's a universal thing. So we address the Father, and we address the Father in the name of the Son. He's the mediator. Under girding all the teaching of the Bible is representation; representation. Adam represented the race, and he fell and the race fell. The last Adam represents his people, he succeeds, and the saints overcome in him. The gates of hell shall not prevail against those who are represented by him. So representative mediation, how important that is.

Now, another thing. In other words, the Lord no longer interposes himself between the Father and the disciples. He, by virtue of his saving work on the cross, representing us, has made it possible for us to be introduced directly to the Father. And that with boldness as John will say in I John chapter 5, verse 14; we have a boldness, we have a right to speak directly to the Lord. That word translated boldness in I John 5:14 was often associated with a right of a citizen to speak his mind with the right of free speech in Ancient Greece. It's like the First Amendment rights, I presume. So what we have is the first amendment rights with the Lord. We can speak our minds with Him as a result of what Jesus Christ has done.

Now, since his name is Jesus, Jehovah of Salvation, Jehovah Salvation, our boldness is understandable by virtue of what Christ did in being obedient unto death, and such a death as the death of the cross. He has been highly exalted, given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. And what is that

name? Yahweh, Yahweh. That is his name. That is the awe-prevailing, sovereign name, and we come in that name. That's the name in which we come. Why shouldn't we come with boldness? We come in Christ. We say we are accepted in the blood, don't we? We're saved not because of anything in us. We say to people, "We are saved" and they say, "My, what pride and arrogance to think that you say you are saved. We'll never know if you are saved until the end of time." That's blindness, total blindness. No Christian ever says he's saved because of anything in himself. He's saved because he has a representative who has paid his penalty. He's saved because he's in Christ, and he knows that Christ is acceptable. And so he rests in what Christ has done but when we pray, we pray in the name of Christ. We come in him. That right of free speech with the Father because that's bound up in our relationship to the Lord. We have boldness. When we get down our knees, we don't have to apologize, we come directly to the Father. And God's pleased when his saints exercise faith in his word and do what those things say.

Well, this little paragraph concludes with an exhortation accompanied by a promise, and it should lead to joy, our Lord says. He says in verse 24,

"Until now you've asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be made full."

So who wants to be joyous in the Lord? Well, every Christian does. Well, ask for a few things. Ask for a few things. You'll receive a few things and then you will have some joy.

A question that frequently arises in connection with this is: Should we as Christians pray to the Son? Well, the question may not have it's final answer from John the apostle, but he does have something to say about it. We turn back to John chapter 14 in verse 14 for a moment. Now, the reason I bring this up is because you know when new Christians come to faith in Christ they frequently want to get on their feet in a meeting and say,

“Lord Jesus so and so” and the old saints know that we ought to pray to the Father in the name of the Son and in the power of the Spirit say, “Oooh, what language.” [Laughter] It's like a fellow getting up and talking with a Yankee twang in the midst of us who speak pure English [laughter], or vice versa.

Well, you wonder, Is it alright for us to say, 'Jesus, such and such ... Jesus, this? Well, now the Bible does say we ought to pray to the Father in the name of the Son in the power of the Spirit. That's the thing we ought to do. That's the spiritually, caesural thing to do. But is the other acceptable? Well, there are a few cases in the Bible that seem to suggest that that's all right. In verse 14 of chapter 14 of John we read, “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

Now, in your Authorized Version I don't think that 'me' is found, but it's likely genuine. There are some manuscripts that do not have that. In fact, believe it or not, there are some manuscripts that don't have this whole verse. I have a hunch however, that they don't have this verse because the scribe remembering these other places that “you should ask the Father for things in the name of the Son,” when they saw this verse and said “Ah, this verse is inserted by one of those Jesus people.” [laughter] And so they dropped it out. Some minor manuscripts don't have it at all, but then are very many good manuscripts that do not have the 'me'.

Again, I think that it is likely that the “ask me” was thought by some scribes to be contrary to what he said in John 16, that we should ask the Father and other places, too. So I personally am inclined to think this is genuine. I am glad to see the translators of the New American Standard Bible included it. And what especially makes me think that this is a genuine “me” is the fact that in verse 14 we read, “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” And in the Greek text that 'I' is stressed; the pronoun is there. So if you ask -- let's leave out the me, “so if you ask anything in my name, I will do it,” you are thinking, well, he must be the one who is the object of the asking. So I then think that this text ought to read, “if you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” And so if a

person gets on his feet in a meeting or privately by his bedside, he's a new Christian, he doesn't know that spiritually, caesural way to speak to the Lord is to address the Father in the name of the Son and he says, "Oh Jesus, so and so," well, that will be all right. That will be all right. Now, there are some indications of that. I wish we had time to look at Acts 9, verse 14; Acts 22, verse 14; 2 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 8; and 2 Timothy 2:22. All those speak about addressing the Lord in prayer and the Lord in the context appears to be the Lord Jesus. Stephen's prayer would seem to clinch it because we read in the book of Acts chapter 7, verse 59, "And they stoned Stephen calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit." So Stephen addressed the Lord Jesus directly. He said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and I think he was answered.

Now, then what we should say then from this text is that the spiritually caesural way to speak to the Lord is to speak to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, this is not a magical formula however. It's not to be repeated at the end of every prayer necessarily but there are some like that. They hear a person go on praying and if he doesn't say at the end of it "In the name of the Lord Jesus," then their flits across our mind, "I wonder if God heard that prayer?" But it does not say that that must be audibly expressed. I think I told you one time of a friend of mine who had a father-in-law who was a Roman Catholic, and he finally came to faith in Christ. And he did not know anything about praying. The priest had done all the praying for him. And one day as they set down for Sunday meal, he hadn't been converted very long, and his wife who had usually given thanks for the food said turning to him, "You give thanks." Well, it was the Sunday meal, the whole family was there, and Dwight Cutkis [phonetic] was there too, and he said he started praying. And he prayed along and he stopped and then he started over again and he prayed along, he stopped, he prayed along and finally the third time he just looked up and said, "That's all." [laughter] He didn't know how to end a prayer so he just said, "That's all." Well, I believe that prayer was in the name of the Lord but it wasn't spoken. So it's not a magical formula. We can end a prayer with

'Amen' without saying, "In the name of the Lord," nor is it necessarily good for you to omit it just to prove a point that God does hear your prayers to upset some of us who like to use the formula. So we shouldn't be too upset about those things. We should remember that ordinarily we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now the assurance and prayer. There are two passages that link prayer with assurance or boldness before God and they are in 1 John, so turn over to 1 John chapter 3, verse 21 and verse 22, 1 John chapter 3, verse 21 and verse 22 first. While you're finding it, remember that John Bunyan said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." Now have you found 1 John 3:21, 22. This is what we read, the apostle writes, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us we have confidence before God. And whatever we ask we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." The uncondemning heart, the heart made tranquil by God's forgiveness has boldness in answered prayer, the Apostle John said. That is that prayer, he tells us here, comes subjectively from the clear conscience and objectively from keeping his commandments. Did you notice that? "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God." Now, he means by that, that if our heart does not condemn us because we have entrusted ourselves into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ for time and for eternity. We have confidence before God and whatever we ask we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight. So subjectively, the right relationship, faith in the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus; objectively, the keeping of his commandments.

The supreme example of this is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Back in John chapter 8 in verse 29, we read these words. You needn't turn now, I'm just going to read very quickly and turn there quickly and read this verse. But in John 8 in verse 29, the Lord is speaking and he says,

"And he who sent me is with me, he has not left me alone for I always do those things that are pleasing to him." "He has not left me alone because I do those things that are pleasing to him."

So we do have the things that we ask of the Lord because we keep his commandments. Now, that doesn't mean we keep them perfectly. John tells us in his epistle that the kind of life that believers live is characterized by doing righteousness. It's characterized by loving the brethren, but he acknowledges in many places that it is possible for us to fall, but the bid of our life is different. There has been a definitive change because we have come to know the Lord.

Now, the second passage is in the fifth chapter. This one, 1 John 5, verse 14 and verse 15, 1 John 5 verse 14 and verse 15. This is a most interesting text and quite a bit has been written about it and different interpretations have been offered, but let me begin with verse 13.

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life,"

So John says I have written this epistle to you who believe that you may know that you have eternal life. In other words, this epistle was written in order that men may have assurance of salvation. Now he says,

"Now this is the confidence [That's the word boldness again. This is our right of free speech with the Lord] this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him."

Now the important clause here for us is the clause, "if we ask anything according to his will." That should be self-evident to us.

In chapter 3 in verse 22, the condition of answered prayer is whether our behavior accords with God's commandments. Here whether our requests accord with his will. Now, that is important. Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God or bending his will to ours, but it's the prescribed way of subordinating our will to his. It's by prayer that we seek God's will. And we embrace it, and we align ourselves with it through the communion that we have with him in prayer. Every true prayer that a Christian ever prays is a variation of the theme, "Thy will be done." What Christian ever ever possibly could want something contrary to his will for us? So ultimately, fundamentally we want his will. Now, that's difficult for us to take. And what we do is we get down on our knees and we struggle with the will of God, but ultimately we want his will and so we say, "Lord, make me willing to receive your will as what I really want."

The great illustration is our Lord in Gethsemane. He said, "O, my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." John Calvin said, "He let slip a prayer that was contrary to the will of God but quickly drew it back. Well, he was a human being. He made some mistakes." Our Lord didn't do it that way. He said what he as a truly human person expressed, but even then when he said, "O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," he garrisoned it with, "nevertheless not my will but Thine be done." Our Lord had the perfectly human feeling of wishing to avoid the cross, but only if it were God's will. There is no sinning on the part of our Lord. He enters completely into the feelings that we ourselves would have.

Now, this statement though that we ask anything according to his will is important. I mentioned this before to you but I had a very good friend, he was Bob Theme's uncle, Fritz Theme. He was a banker in California. Very unusual man. He's with the Lord now, and he is rejoicing with the Lord as a very Godly man, very godly

man. When I first met him, he had a tie. This part of the tie was about here. He's was a banker; a vice president of a California bank. This part of the tie stopped about here and this part of the tie was about down to here. [laughter] Well, I said, "Fritz, you didn't tie your tie too well this morning" He said, "Oh, yes, I tied it exactly the way I wanted to." I looked puzzled. He said, "You see, I can wear a tie that much longer." He said, "I'll wear it for a little while with it hanging like that, then I'll move it up about an inch and the knot still looks pretty good. And I keep moving it on up until finally, until finally Lewis, it looks like the tie you have on there but you see [laughter] but you see, I've worn my tie like five times as long as you've worn yours. You've wasted a lot of money." I confess that really made me feel kind of bad but I quickly got over it however, I wasn't going to wear any a tie hanging down here like this. [laughter]

Well, anyway, we were talking about prayer that same morning, and Fritz somehow or another the subject came up and he was a bachelor, and incidentally that explains a lot, [laughter] so Fritz said, "You know there is one prayer," he said. "I am very serious about prayer." And I said, "I am serious about prayer, too." He said "But, I'm really, really serious about prayer." And so I knew he had something to say. He was a good student of the Bible. He studied it constantly. He said, "You know, there is a text in 1 John 5 that says, "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." Now he thought of prayer as being so serious that whatever we ask, he would do. Now, he didn't turn to this passage here. I turned to that, I misled you. The passage back in the gospel says, "if you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." He took that absolutely. He said, "You see, if I ask anything in his name, Jesus said that he will do it; therefore, I do not pray without a lot of thought." I said, "Fritz, you've overlooked 1 John 5:14. It says, "if we ask anything according to his will." In other words, 1 John 5:14 must also be considered with John chapter 14 in verse 14. I think that is true. We had quite a good argument over it. I didn't convince him. He, as long as I know until his death, was very careful about this. He believed the word

of God and therefore he was very careful if he ever prayed in the name of the Lord Jesus, for he felt surely that that was going to come to pass.

Well, I said I was going to say a word about our Lord's example in prayer, and I want to say just a word about it as we close. The famous Lord's Prayer is a section John chapter 17 that we've looked at, and so I don't feel it's necessary to say anything much about it, but this famous Lord's Prayer, which is found in the Gospel of Matthew, is one that our Lord never prayed. The high priestly prayer in John 17 is one that he prayed. The synoptics, incidentally -- the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, often speak of our Lord's prayer, but very rarely do they ever speak of the contents of his prayer. And so John 17 is particularly important for us because it gives us the content of one of our Lord's prayers. And you know what it is. It's a prayer for his own people. He says, "I don't pray for the world, I pray for those who are believers and for those who shall believe in me." That was the concern of the prayer of our Lord. I think this seventeenth chapter of John is valuable for three reasons. I'll just state them and make one sentence afterwards. It's important as an example of our Lord's method of praying. It's important as an example of the contents of his prayer. Notice his interests and concerns. And it's important as an example of true spiritual pedagogy. The teacher who has lectured the apostles in the Upper Room Discourse now becomes the intercessor and prays for those whom he has taught.

Well, what a magnificent thing is prayer. John Bunyan said, "Prayer will make a man cease from sin or will entice a man to -- or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer." William Gurnell said, "When people do not mind what God speaks to them in His Word, God doth as little mind what they say to him in prayer." How important it is that we pray. And what a terrible condemnation it is, as Donald Bloesch said, "As many Christians including theologians, have a prayer life that is virtually nonexistent." May God help us to exercise our right of free speech in prayer with the Lord. Let's bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, what an encouragement it is to us to know that we can come to Thee in our representative, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and know that Thou dost hear our petitions. O God, teach us to pray in accordance with Thy will. Give us answers to our prayers that we may rejoice in accomplishing things under Thee for the glory of the Triune God. O God, teach us to pray.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.