

Sermon Title: Prayer and Faith
Scripture Text: Mark 11:22-26

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-14-19

The Book of Mark is our venue. When J. Vernon McGee does his ministry—that he still does 30 years after he died—of going through the Bible books on the daily radio program, I'm pretty sure he calls it: "Marching Through Mark." And we are marching—we've marched up to the last week of the life of Jesus. It takes up six chapters in Mark, which is not a surprise; it takes up about a third of all four of the Gospels.

We know that Jesus entered Jerusalem in what we call the Triumphal Entry. That night, He went into the Outer Court of the temple. He looked around—it wasn't that He was trying to discover something; He was casing the joint for what He was going to do the next day. Next morning, after they had gone and spent the night in Bethany, two miles away, at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, He and the Twelve headed back into the city. Along the way, Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree in leaf, and that meant there should be fruit on it; and He went up and looked, and there was no fruit. And Jesus cursed the fig tree, and *instantly*, the fig tree was totally withered! And I'm sure the disciples were pretty curious about that. He didn't say a word; He just said, talking to the tree: "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" (Mk. 11:14; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)—headed off, went into Jerusalem.

That day, He cleared the temple. And there was, obviously, to be a connection between His cursing of the fig tree and His clearing out of the money changers and the animal sellers that were turning the "house of prayer" into a "robbers' den" (Mk. 11:17). He was showing God's judgment on that whole apostate religious system. People often call that the "Cleansing of the Temple." He didn't *cleanse* it! It was back to business as usual within the next couple of days, probably. And there, they were holding the meetings to murder the Messiah! It wasn't a cleansing, it was a picture of the judgment that would come. And sure enough, in A.D. 70, that whole temple was destroyed.

Well, they went back to Bethany again that night; He did that every night during that week. And then the next morning, they were on their way into the city, and He stopped at the cursed and withered fig tree; and *this* time, He *did* talk. This time, He gave a lesson to the Twelve about prayer. And it's very obvious that it was *only* for the Twelve, in contrast to what He was saying to everybody in the temple during the days of that week. This was something very specific for them—and, obviously, it's for us, because it is recorded in God's Word for us to learn from (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

But the obvious question that we've answered in our last couple of studies is: "Why *then*? Why a lesson on prayer?" We can see how it fits into the Sermon on the Mount; we can see how it fits into several of His other discourses and parables. But, why there? All these momentous prophecy-fulfilling things going on, and He stops off and gives this lesson on prayer. Well, it was because of the need of the Twelve. He had been training them for about a year, and even though they didn't fully understand it all yet, the fact is: they had only two or three more days with their beloved Lord, before their lives were going to be turned upside down and changed forever when He went to the Cross, and then He would go into the grave, and then He would rise again, and then they would see Him again, and He would ascend to the Father—and *they* were going to have to do a world-changing ministry without Jesus present. In other words: they really needed prayer, and they needed to learn how to pray.

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So we got into this section; we sort of started last time, and then we ran into the end of our service, so I promised that this week, we would focus just on this lesson on prayer and faith—or, faithful prayer, or, praying in faith. Mark 11:22 through 26. We can break it down this way—prayer and faith has to do with these five points: Remember Who God Is; Remember Whoever—I'll tell you what *that* means when we get there; Remember to Ask; Remember Who You Are; and then, I can't resist, because not everything on prayer is here: Remember Other Things—and I'll try to wrap that up for you.

First of all: Remember Who God Is. Now, this is the morning after the day that Jesus cleared the temple. The primary command is in Verse 22, but I want to read to you starting at Verse 20—"As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter said to Him, 'Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.' And Jesus answered, saying to them, 'Have faith in God.' " Now, there is the main command for prayer: "Have faith in God."

Now, realize: this whole lesson was triggered by them seeing the evidence of the power of God left over from what Jesus had done the day before. They were reminded when they saw the fig tree, and there is a principle that's going to help you with praying, right in that very thing that this was all triggered by—they being reminded of a demonstration of the power of God. The principle is that, your prayer life will never be stronger than your knowledge of the mighty deeds of God recorded in Scripture.

You can't be reminded of what you don't know. You need to know those things. Listen to sermons. Read books about God and about His Word. Most importantly: feed your own soul from God's Word, as the most tenacious habit of self-discipline that you have. Why? Because the command is: "Have faith in God"—if you don't know who He is, if you don't know His track record, if you don't know the revelation of His will, then your faith is going to be weak; and faith in God is the *absolute essential bedrock* upon which your prayer life needs to be built.

"Believing" or "having faith"—that means that, your prayer is always God-oriented. So you don't despair if you don't see immediate results, because you have faith, you have trust, you're waiting on Him. Faith remains in *uninterrupted* contact with God (see 1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Ps. 16:8), and therefore: faithful prayer keeps praying fervently (Lk. 18:1). Faith knows that, God does things on His own timeline and in His own ways. Faith does not question what God has revealed. Faith continues to obey what God has revealed. Faith says, "I trust You, Father" (see 1 Pet. 4:19).

The prayer faith is not motivated by selfish, sinful desires. True faith in prayer never wants to tempt God. True faith asks for what God wants (2 Sam. 7:25). It asks for what will glorify God (Jn. 14:13). Therefore, you praying is part of the process of anything that God chooses to do; even if it seems impossible—you get to be part of it! (see 2 Cor. 1:10-11; cf. Ezek. 36:37) Remember what we've read about moving mountains? We're going to see it again today. You get to be part of that as you join in, in praying for that which will glorify God.

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James Chapter 4, Verse 3 talks about the flipside of that—the wrong way. He says: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." God did not give you the gift of prayer—the privilege to pray—for your convenience, for your "pleasures," for your wants, for your comfort. God gives you the gift of prayer for your *communion* with Him, for your relationship with Him, for you to be demonstrating your trust in His faithfulness.

Now, I've read James 4:3. I *believe* James 4:3. I *also* know: you can't avoid mixing in your own desires when you talk to God. It would be silly to think that you could, because the truth is: you only have your perspective, you only live your life, you only see what *you* can see—you don't see the other 19 points of view, the other things that are going on that may be in play there. And you have a perspective that is always tainted by your own finiteness compared to His infinitude. Your perspective is always tainted by your sinfulness compared to His perfect holiness. So, yeah: you'll never pray perfectly—I get that (Rom. 8:26). But faith in God wants what God deems best, and what will glorify Him (Ps. 115:1). Oh, and by the way—in one of His other passages teaching on prayer, He says: "Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8; cf. Ps. 139:4). I've said it many times: He's the only one that you can pray to, and try to say it and try to lay it out, and then you can say, "Oh... *You* know what I mean!" He's the only one you can say that to who *ever really does*—like nobody else!

So, Remember Who God Is—that's the basis of prayer. "Have faith in God." Now: Remember Whoever. There's a very important point here. Mark 11:23—Jesus says: "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him." Now, I explained to you last time: that's hyperbole; that's overstatement for effect. This is not teaching you that, if you have enough faith and you do it right and you put the words together in the right way and you really-really-really-*really* believe, then you can change the topography of the planet. That's not what it's saying! It's saying that, you can do the impossible, you can see the impossible. A "mover of mountains" was a Jewish idiom for a teacher or a leader who could do what seemed impossible.

But I want you to notice the key word there: "whoever." And notice, also: "believes." Whoever believes—*truly* believes in the true God—is going to see things happen in prayer. The word "whoever" translate into English a combination of a relative pronoun and a verb in the subjunctive mood—and that part's not supposed to give you goosebumps, but what it's supposed to mean is: it means "whoever." This is open to *anyone*! They had been watching Jesus do things and *nobody else* could do (Jn. 15:24), and now He's saying: "*Whoever* is connected to My Father by faith—you're going to see things happen by having faith in Him."

You might hear the expression: "The power of prayer," or you might hear the expression: "The power of faith." If I ever say those things, I'm making a mistake. I try to avoid using either of them, because they connote that there's something about *your act* of praying that has power attached to it; or, there's something about *your faith* that turns it into a force—and that's wrong. The power does not reside in *you*; the power does not reside in you crafting a really well-done prayer. The power is in God, in whom you trust (Ps. 62:11).

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"Faith healers" and the false teachers of the "Word Faith Movement" and the "Prosperity Gospel" preachers—they get away with their brand of spiritual abuse by telling people: "There *is* power in your prayer! There *is* power in your words! You have the same ability that God has, to speak things into existence!" That's *blasphemy*, it's totally wrong, and it is an absolutely brilliant way to blame everybody else when you teach falsehood and it doesn't work for them! You say, "Well, you didn't have the right faith! *You* don't *really* know how to pray!" The power is not in the prayer. The power is not in the faith. The power is in God. Your faith is *in Him!* Very important point.

And, by the way: You don't have perfect faith. You'll *never* have perfect faith. Oh, my faith is a lot deeper and a lot more profound now than it was when I first was drawn to faith by the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit; but *always*, I think just like that man in Mark Chapter 9, Verse 24—the one whose son was healed. He cried out one of the most honest statements in all of the Bible: "I do believe; help my unbelief." "God, I believe in You with all my heart, but You know how pathetic my heart is! I don't believe in anybody else! Help my unbelief!"

Prayer is the joyful privilege of talking directly to God because you're united with Him as His adopted child (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), based upon what Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross. And this privilege is open to "*whoever* believes"—whoever has faith in God. When you're attached to Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth—anything He does, you can be part of Him getting the glory for that. So, "Have faith in God," *whoever* you are.

Remember Who God Is. Remember Whoever. Third one—and this is so practical. Mark 11:24—Remember to Ask. Jesus says: "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you." Prayer is this wonderful privilege; but also, on our end, it's a matter of discipline to actually take time to pray with a sincere faith in God and a sincere desire for what He wants. When you pour out your heart to God, with complete trust in Him to hear you and to understand and to have compassion and to do whatever will honor Him, you know that your every prayer is answered.

Now, when I say "answered," that doesn't mean you always get what *you* want, here and now; but it means that you always receive good things from a loving Heavenly Father (Ps. 84:11)—things that He designs to use in your life to make you more like Jesus Christ, and to help you rest with complete assurance that He is in control of things. But you've *got to remember* to ask! He doesn't just say, "Have faith in God, and everything will work out." He wants *you* to be involved in the process by taking the time to shove away everything else in your world, and stop and ask Him.

Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 7—when Jesus talked about this during the Sermon on the Mount, He said: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Those are three strong action words: "ask"—and it's present tense: "keep on asking"; "seek"—"keep on seeking"; "knock"—"keep on knocking." And when you have faith in God, *and* you persistently "ask," "seek," and "knock,"—or, "pray and ask"—that's why Jesus could say to His men so boldly, what He says in Matthew 6; and I want to pluck just a little bit from Verses 25 to 34. Jesus said: "Do not be worried about your life...And who of you by being

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worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried?...Do not worry then...But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." What is "all these things"? "All these things" you need for living in this world; He will give them to you. And then He goes on to say, in Verse 34—"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Hey, I'm so gifted in the worry department, I don't have to worry about tomorrow—I can worry about this afternoon! The point is: *Don't do that!* Instead, "Have faith in God"; remember that this great privilege to come to Him is open to you, and come to Him often in faith; stop, "pray and ask."

That's why the Apostle Paul wrote his famous words: Philippians Chapter 4, Verses 6 and 7—"Be anxious"—same word as "worrying"—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Do you see there? Don't forget to stop and ask. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (cf. Is. 26:3). Why can it surpass all comprehension? Because *it's from God* (see Jn. 14:27), and somebody who doesn't know God can't understand why you could *possibly* be at calm, living in a world this messed up! Or, the Apostle Peter wrote his version: First Peter 5:7—"Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (cf. Ps. 55:22)—but you've got to stop and throw it to Him, cast it to Him, put it on Him.

That's the kind of understanding that the Apostles were *desperately* going to need when Jesus was gone; and we need it all the time. But did you see that, in order to not be enslaved by anxiety and worry, every one of those passages says explicitly: You must remember to ask. "Ask," "seek," "knock," "seek first," "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," "casting all your anxiety"—that's why Jesus said it the way He did for the Apostles: "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you."

You've got to remember to ask! You've got to be willing to shove away the noise of the world, and pray to God in humble faith. Do you know, *that* is even more helpful than posting your situation on Facebook? Do you know that, prayer is even more helpful than talking about it over and over and over again? I heard somebody talk about a restaurant somewhere in the U.S. I'm not sure where it is, but they've instituted a new policy: They've said they will give *free meals* to all the children in the family, for any family that will come to eat there and check their cell phones at the door, and talk only to each other—because *that's* what makes families work! And guess what? We're the family of God (see Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). We need to put aside the things that distract us, and *ask*. You might even end up echoing the Apostle Paul's words in First Thessalonians Chapter 5, Verses 16 through 18—"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

So, prayer and faith. Remember Who God Is; Remember Whoever; Remember to Ask; and Number 4—Remember Who *You* Are. There's an often-ignored matter about prayer. It *is* the privilege that you have, as a child of God, to "pour out your heart" to your Heavenly Father (Ps. 62:8), who "knows what you need before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8). But the point that is often ignored is that, *He* cares about *your* heart as you approach Him (Prov. 23:26). It's not just that

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you can toss up a prayer here and there, and God is going to willingly receive it. He will, but the point is: You can't expect God to respond to your specific prayers if *you* are refusing to respond to His glorious grace in Jesus Christ. If you aren't willing to remember what it means to be a Christian, then don't be a hypocrite by pretending to be a good friend of God. If you are truly forgiven by God, it will *show* by the way you treat other people; it will show by your willingness to forgive others every time the opportunity arises (see Prov. 19:11b).

Look at the last two verses of our pericope: 25 and 26—"Whenever you stand praying"—now, it doesn't mean God can't hear you if you're sitting down or lying down; there are many postures for prayer. Standing was the normal Jewish male way to pray, but you can stand up, you can lie down, you can fall on your face, you can lift your hands toward heaven, you can lift your eyes toward heaven, you can cry out to heaven. It's not the posture He's talking about, when you pray. "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions." Somebody has wronged you. What do you want for that relationship? Revenge? A cold shoulder? The *end*? Or, do you want see the other person forgiven? Would you like to see that relationship restored?

Then, Verse 26—"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions." I explained last week that Verse 26 is in brackets because it isn't in the best manuscripts of Mark; it's a conflation from Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 15. It's a perfectly fine verse; it *is* in the context of prayer, but it just doesn't belong in Mark Chapter 11. I gave you a little mini-lesson last week on how we know which manuscripts of the Bible are the best ones.

But you don't need verse 26 to get the point of Verse 25. You might say this is the moral requirement for genuine prayers of faith. The forgiveness in view here is not talking about your eternal forgiveness, which is part of the package deal of your salvation; that's not based on works, that's not based on relationships with other people. That one can't be lost. He's talking about "relational" forgiveness—the fact that there are sins that are part of our daily lives that can disrupt our fellowship with the Lord and with each other. To attempt to pray while you are harboring an unforgiving attitude against another person, is self-defeating. It's pretty clear what God commands us in regard to each other.

I thought of First Peter Chapter 3, where husbands are admonished, how you live with your wife; and if you don't get it right, your prayers won't be heard! (see 1 Pet. 3:7) You say, "Wait a minute! Gods' holding me hostage. I've got to be nice to her to get my prayers answered?" In real practical terms—Yes, you do! Your relationships demonstrate your relationship with God (e.g. Prov. 14:31; Jas. 3:9-10). Ephesians 4:32, very clear: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." And if you fail to do that, you know what? That's a sin! The Bible also puts it this way: Psalm 66:18—"If I regard wickedness in my heart"—and that means, to look upon it with favor; if I'm clinging to my wickedness, if I'm refusing to confess and to forsake it—"If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." God doesn't go deaf; it means, He's not listening to you.

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So, the choice you face is pretty clear when it comes to prayer: Hold a grudge, or have your prayers heard. Seek revenge, or do it God's way. You cannot accept the full, gracious forgiveness of God, and then be unforgiving to someone else—that's an incongruity; it doesn't work that way. *Forgiven* people become *forgiving* people. There's a parable about that in Matthew 18:23 through 35.

Make no mistake—I don't want you to hear something I didn't say, or twist what I did say. You cannot have joyful fellowship restored with someone who has sinned against you, who refuses to confess and repent from their sin against you. The relationship can't be the same until there is confession. But *you*, for *your* part, need to make sure that you are open to, and you are yearning for, the opportunity to forgive as you have been forgiven (see Ps. 86:5; Lk. 17:3-4).

Make these points your ongoing study as you think about prayer and faith. Always: Remember Who God Is; Remember, this is for Whoever; Remember To Ask; Remember Who You Are; and, I couldn't help myself: Remember Other Things. That's not all there is in the Bible on prayer, but understand: you don't always know what God intends to do. I'm telling you to pray for what God wants—you don't perfectly know what that is! So your prayer has to include a massive dose of humility. Prayer is the lesser one asking the Greater One for help. That's what prayer is.

It's very popular today for people to talk about God speaking to you in prayer—*that is wrong*. God doesn't speak to you in prayer—that wouldn't be prayer! That would be special divine revelation! *You* speak to *God* in prayer! He *has* spoken to *you* "in many portions and in many ways" (Heb. 1:1) over a long period of time, and it's all recorded in a big book called the Bible; and He continues to speak through that Word every day. Like our friend Justin Peters says: "You want to hear God speak to you? Read the Bible! You want to hear Him speak audibly? Read it out loud!" *That's* how God speaks to you—it's through His Word, which stands written for you to feast your soul upon all the time (1 Tim. 4:6). *You* speak to *God* in prayer. What a privilege, that He would listen to me!

And by the way: I don't want you to get paralyzed by saying, "The preacher said I've got to pray for what God wants. I don't have any idea what God wants!" Okay, well, one of the things He wants is, He said: "If you lack wisdom, ask Me! I'll give you wisdom" (see Jas. 1:5; cf. Prov. 2:6). That *still* doesn't mean you're always going to know what God wants. He is perfectly willing for you to "pour out your heart" to Him (Ps. 62:8). He's willing to hear: "This hurts!" He's willing to hear: "I don't know." He's willing to hear: "I don't understand." But He wants to hear it from a heart that has total trust in Him (see Ps. 34:15; 103:13; 147:11).

I'll often visit someone who's dying, and I'll ask God: "Please grant my friend more time to serve You here on Earth, and that we may enjoy fellowship along the way." But I have to add, like Jesus did: "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42, NKJV). If you're hurting, and I pray for you, I'm not going to pray, "Lord, kick her again! She hasn't gotten the lesson yet!" If He was to do that, that's up to Him; but *I'm* going to pray for your recovery. If you start a business, I'm going to pray for your success—unless it's immoral or blasphemous. I'm going to pray for all kinds of blessings for people, but I also realize: this is a sin-cursed and

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twisted world, and I realize: what we see now is not the final chapter. All the wrongs *will* be made right in the kingdom of God (see Ecc. 12:14). So along with our prayers is the attitude: "I believe You. Give me more faith, that I may embrace Your will as it unfolds." Don't forget, the umbrella command over this teaching on prayer is: "Have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22).

In this world, understand: no matter how much you pray, no matter how *eloquently* you pray, no matter where you pray, who you pray with, what language you speak—the point is: in this world, there will always be pain—genuine, sometimes *excruciating* pain. There's physical pain that can be *devastating*. Some of you have dealt with pain that goes even to the point of clouding your ability to think straight. There's also heartache pain; that's even *worse!* Remember when the Apostle Paul gave that rundown of that gruesome list of absolutely terrible things he suffered physically in his ministry and under persecution? And then, he says this, in Second Corinthians 11:28 and 29: "Apart from such external things"—I mean, beaten and left for dead...that's pretty serious pain! "Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" He had been betrayed by people he trusted; nothing hurts like that. He had witnessed moral failure of people who knew better and professed faith in Christ, but they chose the world instead.

Even if you're not one of the shepherds of the flock, you may know similar feelings when somebody betrays you, falsely accuses you—whatever it might be. You might be standing by the bedside of a loved one that's wasting away, wracked with cancer and dying. There's no pain like a parent attending the funeral of a child. I've seen it—it's *awful*. I've done funerals of people who committed suicide, and I've seen the rawest, gaping, bleeding, oozing wounds of human grief.

But here's the crucial point: "Have faith in God," and remember this: Faith does not form its view of God based on the circumstances of a sin-cursed world which is in rebellion against Him. Unbelievers *love* to use that argument. "*How could God allow...*"—whatever it is. How could God allow *you* to have the next breath, with your open rebellion against Him? (see Lam. 3:39) Don't form your view of God from what you see in this sin-cursed world. That sick person may or may not recover. You might get hit by a drunk driver and crippled for the rest of your life, even though you prayed for safety. That new job that was so promising, just might evaporate when the company goes bankrupt six months after you picked up your family and moved for the new job. Your retirement plan might melt away in a crash of the market. Your wayward child might never come to genuine faith in the Lord that you so diligently taught them to love. But you *can't* let those consequences of sin and the Curse ruin how you think about God. "Have faith in God."

Paul dealt with people who might have said that God was unfaithful to Israel when He turned away from them, and he said, in Romans 9:14—"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" And maybe, on your worst day, you're saying, "But how am I supposed to cope when so many awful things are going on around me?" That's an honest question, and it's a legitimate question. And the Bible addresses it head on, and you've just seen it this morning. Jesus said it in four words: "Have faith in God."

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Right now, all of "creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth...we ourselves groan within ourselves" (Rom. 8:22-23), but faith waits patiently for God...Romans 8:25--"But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." Perseverance is the power to remain under the load (see Jas. 1:12; Rev. 14:22). Romans 8 goes on to explain that, even the midst of that, "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (vs. 26). As I trust God and I pray, the Holy Spirit is praying with me. I can't tell you how that works, but I sure like it! He's praying!

And so, where does that take you? When you get to the end of your prayer, and the person *isn't* well, and the relationship *isn't* restored, and you still don't know what to do, and it still hurts—you can come to this confident statement of faith: Roman's 8:28—"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." You can *only* say that when you "Have faith in God."

Let's use this privilege. Let's pray:

Father, how we do thank You for the glorious riches of Your grace in Christ Jesus. Thank You that we can come to You; we can call upon You. Thank You for Your goodness and kindness and compassion, to hear all of our prayers. We don't even know how that's possible, but You do. Teach us greater and greater faith. We do believe—help our unbelief! Teach us to trust You, and to confidently persevere as we call upon You to do that which will get You glory in the end, that which will advance Your kingdom, that which will make us more like the Savior, and that which will cause the spread of the gospel. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.