

Keys to Answered Prayer XI

Fred R. Coulter—February 17, 2007

Prayer is the great relationship—*spiritual relationship*—between you and God. And is the dynamics through which God’s Spirit works with us: to help us, to teach us, to mold us, and so forth. And what you’re going to find is that the series that we have been doing on prayer will actually carry right on over into the Days of Unleavened Bread. As a matter of fact, I’m going to have the last day of Unleavened Bread for this year, 2007, to be number 12 or 13 in the series on answered prayer.

So let’s come to Matthew six, where we’ve started on all of these and come back to the model prayer, and let’s look at the section again. Let’s go over what Jesus said, again. And prayer becomes the great blessing and communication that God uses in your life—and you use in your life to communicate with God. Let’s review a little bit—and why this is the model prayer. Because this then is like the foundation—much like when Jesus said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and being; and your neighbor as yourself. On these two hang all the law and the prophets.’ Well, on the model prayer—as we have here in Matthew 6 and Luke 11—this is the foundation on which everything concerning prayer hangs. So there are many, many subdivisions and aspects that hang upon this, to give us the keys to answered prayer.

So you know how it starts out: Matthew 6:9: “...Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name... [First of all you acknowledge God. Know that He is Holy.] ...Your kingdom come...” (vs 9-10). That gives us focus always on what we are to do. We are always to be looking to God and the coming Kingdom, but also realize something else that’s important with this

Hold your place here and come to Colossians, the first chapter—because when we say, ‘Your Kingdom come,’ we’re not just necessarily referring to the second return of Christ. There is something else that is involved, that’s involved with our prayers, which we find here in Colossians, the first chapter. Now some people misunderstand this and make some—matter of fact the Catholic Church says this tells you the Kingdom of God is on earth in the form of the Catholic Church. And the Kingdom of Heaven is where the souls go. So that’s how they split the Word of God.

Now, let’s pick it up here in Colossians 1:11: “Being strengthened with all power... [Now, the spiritual strength that we receive begins in prayer, and it is built as we study, because the words—as Jesus said—‘that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life.’] ...Being strengthened with

all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light; Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness... [And we’ll talk about that later] ...and has transferred *us*... [this is the point I want to make] ...transferred *us* unto the kingdom of the Son of His love...” (vs 11-13). Now, we are obviously not in the Kingdom of God now. So the *King James* says ‘into the kingdom.’ No, we’re not *into* the Kingdom, but we have been brought under the jurisdiction *of* the Kingdom of God.

That’s why it says in Philippians, the third [transcriber correction] chapter—let’s just turn back there—that our allegiance, our citizenship is to God, first of all; because

- God has called us
- He’s called us out of the world
- He’s revealed to us His Son
- He’s forgiven our sins
- He’s revealed to us
 - ✓ His Word
 - ✓ His plan
 - ✓ His Sabbath
 - ✓ His Holy Days

—and all of these things

Philippians 3:20: “But for us, the commonwealth *of God* exists in *the heavens*...” Now, that’s very interesting— ‘commonwealth’ is really a better translation—‘conversation,’ ‘citizenship,’ ‘the origin of our conduct’—the Greek there is ‘politeia’ which then you can extrapolate *our politics*. That’s why we are not to get involved in the politics of this world. And where has it led? I mean, where has it led? The whole lesson of being “called out of the world” and being under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God is that we affirm to God that every single government of man *fails!* God will never fail! So when we say, “Your Kingdom come.” we are also placing ourselves under the jurisdiction of God the Father and Jesus Christ—that’s what it is.

“...[for the] the commonwealth [or the ‘politeia’ or the conduct—all of those can apply. So if you want to expand and amplify that word, they will all apply there.] ...*of God* exists in *the heavens*, from where also we are waiting for *the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (v 20).

So here we see that since we are under the jurisdiction of Kingdom of God now, we’re also looking for Christ to bring the Kingdom. It all applies there. That’s why back here in Matt. 6 it is

an outline, because you take from that and you hang on those words in Matt. 6, *all* of these various things of the *keys to answered prayer*. Now notice—we can add this in: “Who will transform our vile bodies... [And we’re looking to the resurrection—aren’t we?] ...that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able* to subdue all things to Himself” (v 21).

Now let’s come back to Matthew 6 again, because the thing is this—and the biggest mistake that people make, and this is why we have the series: *Why God Hates Religion*. I mean, if you can’t see that in Islam today, then I can’t help you understand. All religions set up a man’s organization and men and buildings and things *between* you and God. They add their traditions. They add their beliefs to it, which then becomes the ‘way of Cain.’ Let me just give you a brief summary of ‘the way of Cain,’ because we’ll see this a little later as we go along—and won’t have to mention that it’s the ‘way of Cain.’ The briefest summary of the way of Cain is this: ***Man tells God what he will do for Him, rather than God telling man what He will do for him.*** That’s the simplest explanation of the “way of Cain”—you can read that back in Gen. 4.

Now notice, let’s come back here to Matthew 6:10: “Your kingdom come... [It has a whole lot more to do than just the second coming of Christ, because all the Christians from the time of Jesus, down to the return of Christ—with the exception of those in the very last generation—did not live in the flesh to see the coming of the Kingdom of God. So it has to have a far greater application.] ...Your will be done on earth...” And God’s will is done on earth; He rules in the kingdoms of men; He sets up over the basest of men. And if you don’t believe that, just look at the governments in the world and focus in on the ruling power in Congress in the United States today. And if you don’t understand that, well then, I can’t help you. *Why? Because the people are sinning.* The people elected them. The people deserve them. And they are getting exactly what they want.

Now, another thing that I think—just a political aside here: Those people who believe in at least a substantial amount of the morality of God—let’s say the last six of the Ten Commandments—they’re getting older, they’re dying, and all the mush-head generations that they have been training in public school are now coming to the fore. They think in the capricious ways that the democrats think today. So, what I see is this: God is telling His people—that is, the Church—don’t place any hope in the government ***because it’s all going to be given over to those people who hate God.*** And the greatest funder for those people and those political positions

is a billionaire, and his name is George Soros; and he brags that he is an atheist. And he wants to get rid of God in America. And since those who knew somewhat about God were never really serious in doing what God wanted them to do, rather they were serious in taking part of what God says and then tell God what we will do, God is bringing that judgment back upon them. So we are going to end up with a terrible government. I don’t know if it’s going to be this next coming election in 2008, or if it’s going to be 2010, or if it’s going to be 2012. But it is coming!—because all of those who have any semblance of morality at all are getting older and are dying. And just think how many, many people in that category are going to die between now and 2008, and 2010 and 2012. And you’re going to have this hippy-yippy, yappy drug liberal culture—God haters, Christian haters—are going to run the government. And they are going to be aligned with all the riff-raff from South America and around the world.

So, that’s why he says, “Your kingdom come... [Put no stock whatsoever in what men are going to do] ...as *it is* in heaven... [And it’s God’s *will* that the government change that way because of the morals of the people.] ...Give us this day our daily bread...” (vs 10-11). We’re going to understand that more when it comes down to the time when you won’t be able to run out and buy everything you need at the local store—because that day is coming. Every time I walk in a big supermarket, or I go to a place like Costco, or I go to a place like Home Depot or Lowe’s or Walmart, and I walk in and I look and I see all of these things, and I think when that’s cut off it’s going to be a disaster. Excuse me for diverging in my thoughts here, as we go, but sometimes you have to live with some of the things that I’ve read.

They are now working on an “e-bomb.” Now, let me tell you what an ‘e-bomb’ is: An ‘e-bomb’ is an electromagnetic bomb. When they explode that in the air over a city it fries everything that’s electrical! POOF! Everything is gone! Everything electrical: all computers. Now, if you’re working in one of these high-rise buildings: elevators don’t work, air-conditioning doesn’t work, computers don’t work, refrigerators don’t work, lights don’t go on. You can absolutely *waste* a whole city without having one single, bloody casualty. What they worry about is if they develop this technology, it will become easier and easier to do—and guess whose hands they’re worried it’s going to fall into. And when they get the technology easier and easier to do, it only costs \$400 to do it.

Now, I’m not saying this to scare you, but the thought of it ought to make you run to God real quickly. And I think we need to look at and

remember a little more closely what Jesus said, because He said that the time is coming that if God did not intervene ‘there would be no flesh saved alive.’ And that’s not a atomic and hydrogen bombs, that’s through everything that’s going to take place. All you have to do is a half-dozen of these in America. Do Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, St. Louis—you’ve conquered the nation! And then with all of these patsy, surrender people, they will just give up instantly—won’t they? So you see, while we still have the good times, *work!* While we still have the peace to do things we need to do, *do it!* While you have time to pray and develop a relationship with God, *do it!* Don’t put it off till tomorrow. Don’t put it off till next week.

“...And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors... [we’ve covered that very thoroughly] ...and **lead us not into temptation...**” (vs 12-13). Now, that’s what we want to cover today. What does He mean by this? You could also put it this way: ‘lead us not into trials’—because sometimes we bring trials on ourselves because we won’t listen to God—because what? *We’re trying to do our own will!* It’s just like this, and I’ve brought this up before: I’ve tried to put things together that we’ve purchased and I look at the picture of it and in my own mind—well, I can do that. Supposed to take only 20 minutes. So, I get it all together and it’s not the way it’s supposed to be. And so, Delores comes down after about 45 minutes to an hour, she says, ‘Well, how’s it coming?’ I said, ‘I don’t know, I didn’t do this thing right.’ She said, ‘Well, did you read the instructions?’ And I said, ‘No, I didn’t!’ Now this is an example to show you that many times the trials that we go through are of our own doing because we don’t listen to God; or in the case of doing something like this, you don’t read the instructions!

Same way with prayer. You’ve got to know how to pray, and prayer is something that you work at and that you develop and that you grow in. And you read some of the Psalms—which we’ll do later on—that every trial that you go through is to help you draw closer to God so that you won’t do your will, but that you’ll do the will of God in your life. That’s what it’s all for. So, when they come along, learn to take it in that way. Don’t be mad at so and so, don’t be mad at the other, they may have been an instrumentality in it; but it’s been our own stupidity too many times. Now, here’s another way you could express that: ‘Do not give us over to our own temptations.’

Now, let’s go back to James, the first chapter. I think this is where we left off last time, I believe. There are a lot of lessons that we can learn which will help us in prayer. The thing that is

important to understand is that in prayer you’re developing a relationship with God, so that God can work in your life even more. So that in daily living, God will help you and strengthen you in what you do so that we don’t go on repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

James 1:1 “James, a servant of God and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes... [Just as an aside, as I’ve mentioned before, you think that James would write a letter to the 12 tribes if he didn’t know where they were? Of course he knew where they were.] ...which *are* in the dispersion... [scattered all over the Mediterranean into Parthia, into England, into Babylon] ...Greetings! Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials...” (vs 1-2).

Now, the only way we’re ever going to come to that kind of view of trials that we experience is if we let the trial teach us the will of God. Now, the joy doesn’t come when you’re going through it. The joy comes afterward when you have been exercised by it and you have the righteousness develop because of that. And you don’t have joy when you’re going through it, but you do when you come out the other end of it.

“Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.... [It’s what God wants. What did Jesus say: the one who what? ‘Endures to the end, the same shall be saved.’ Now, you can just put in your notes here, or margin, Matt. 13 and Mark 4 about the ‘sower of the seed’—didn’t have endurance.

Verse 4—here’s the key: “But let endurance have *its* perfect work... [Now, the *King James* says ‘patience’—but you need patience and endurance and the word is interchangeable. But endurance is more applicable.] ...so that you may be perfect and complete... [***Here is the goal of every trial and difficulty*** that you go through.] ...***that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything***” (vs 2-4). Now, just put in your margin: Matt. 5:48: ‘you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect.’ And this is what God is doing with us.

What’s important is this for us to understand: Even though we go through the trials and difficulties that we go through, it’s much easier to be perfected with our cooperation than with our resistance. Now, all of you who have children, or have had to deal with children, you get some brat that doesn’t want to be dressed. Some little kid: ‘No! I don’t want that! No! I don’t want that! No! I don’t want that!’ Finally, when you persuade them and get them dressed—and especially if it’s a girl and she looks really good in the outfit—she says, ‘Oh, that’s

nice.’ But, look at all the agony going through it.

Now, let’s look at it this way: Though God has infinite patience, what does He delight in more than anything else? *Those who are willing!* And the truth is this: The more you agree with God, the more you yield to God, the more character you develop and you become more perfected. And you don’t have to be totally beaten up all the time. Keep that in mind.

James 1:5: “However, if anyone lacks wisdom... [Because when you’re going through a trial you need wisdom, you need understanding and so forth] ...let him ask of God, *Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith... [As I’ve said before: if you pray to God and ask something and get up off your knees and say, ‘Well, I don’t know if God’s going answer this or not’; all the time spent on your knees praying is just—like we were talking earlier about these computer chips, you inadvertently erase it. everything is gone, it’s blank—so likewise with your prayer. What you may do is say, ‘God, I know You’re going to answer this prayer, however at this time, I don’t know how you’re going to do it, but I’m going to trust You that You will.’ That’s what you do.] ...But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the sea* that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*... [And water is just that way.] ...Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (vs 5-7).

And what are we trying to receive from the Lord?

- His Spirit
- His mind
- His character
- His understanding—being perfected in, right? *Yes!*

Verse 8: “*He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.... [And so, these are some of the things that we go through. I’m sure you’ve all gone through your ‘double-mindedness’—and you have had to pay the penalty for it.] ...But let the brother who is in humble circumstances rejoice in his elevation, and *let* the one who is rich *rejoice* in his humble condition...” (vs 8-10).

And I know there have been some very successful people, who the first time they ever came to a Church of God said to themselves—as they looked around and saw the motley crew of who the brethren of God really are—‘Are these really God’s people?’ Because they have expected them to be more like themselves. It works both ways, especially if someone comes up and shakes his hand and lives

out back of his farm. I tell you, you’ve really got to love and appreciate God’s people. I know up in Boise we had one man who lived back up in the mountains and pretty well all alone and he’d come down to services. I forget his name, but I’ll never forget his face and what he did and so forth. And he tried to dress the best that he could and so forth, but every time you’d meet him, he’d have this big smile on his face and shake your hand and say, “Praise God.’ You’d think, ‘Hmmmmmmm, I wonder what kind of guy this is.’ But he really meant it. And I know when I shook his hand the first time, I kind of was taken back by...when he said, ‘Praise God.’ Well, he was just happy to be there in church. He was just happy to come be there with the brethren. And when I shook his hand I could hear his elbow rattle. I thought to myself, ‘You know, Fred, you’ve got to change your attitude.’ God loves this man. And He has called all of us. So we just need to remember.

Continuing, v 10: “...as *the flower of the field*, he himself will pass away... [And I think another reason why he was so joyful and saying, ‘Praise God’ was this. He knew his days on earth were limited. And I think the older we get and we come to the point that we know that that is a reality, the more that we appreciate it. So James is making the point here.] ...for the sun rises with *its* burning heat and dries up the grass... [Now, here in California we’ve had some rain. All the hills are nice and green, the flowers are blooming—I suppose in Texas they have their little blue bells out yet—oh well, they’ll come out—yes, sun rises with it’s burning heat and dries up the grass and everything’s going to turn to straw.] ...and its flower falls off, and its beautiful appearance perishes. In the same way also shall the rich man wither in his pursuits” (vs 10-11). What does it say? Seek what? ‘*Seek first*’—what? ‘*The Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you.*’ Not necessarily just in this life. But what is God going to add to us at the resurrection? *A new body, a new mind, a new name, a new existence.* Fantastic!

Good verse—v 12: “Blessed *is the* man who endures trials...” There’s ‘endurance’ again. Now, he gets into defining the difference between a trial—which is the testing of your faith—and correction for your own mistakes. It can also be a combination of the both. I’ve done that. I’ve been corrected for my mistakes and also it’s been a trial of faith. And sometimes it’s a trial of faith with no mistakes, but God is leading you in a way that He wants you to go. And sometimes to get your attention He virtually has to pick you up and set you some place else to get your attention. But remember, there’s a blessing in it.

“Blessed *is the* man who endures trials

because, **after** he has been proved... [Not *before*—after] ...he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (v 12). And that’s what Paul said after he lived his life—and there’s a tremendous example of what Paul went through. When God told Ananias ‘there’s Saul down there and he’s the one I’ve called.’ He says, ‘Lord, isn’t he the one that has hauled out the brethren and killed them?’ He says, ‘He’s a chosen vessel for Me, because I’m going to show him what things he must suffer for Me and the way of God.’ (I’m just summarizing it here.) And Paul did. You read what he had to go through. And finally Paul, he went through so many he learned to say, ‘I rejoice in every one.’ So there’s a great reward for Paul because of that.

But look at what he wrote that God preserved to inspire us! So when we go through the things we won’t be giving up. Now, v 13—come to the temptation here: “Do not let anyone who is tempted say, ‘I am being tempted by God’...

- Now, you may be tempted by circumstances.
- You may be tempted by Satan.
- You may be tempted by your own lusts.
- You may be tempted by someone else.
- There are many different forms of temptation.

...because God is not tempted by evil... [We’ll see how this is as we go along.] ...and He Himself tempts no one *with evil*... [Well, how does God do it then? *He sets it before you with choices*. That’s how God does it! Go back to Deut. 30: ‘I’ve set before you life and death, good and evil, blessing and cursing—choose life that you may love the Lord your God.’ etc. So He sets before us choices. And our choice then should always be: choose God regardless of the circumstances. That’s what God wants.] ...But each one is tempted when he is drawn away... [that is from God and His way] ...and is enticed by his own lust” (vs 13-14). So there’s a process in the temptation. This is why we pray, ‘Don’t let us be led into temptation.’ or ‘Don’t lead us into temptation because of our stupid self-will—‘drawn away, enticed by our own lusts.’

Now, how’s Satan going to come along and tempt you? *Well, he’s going to appeal to your lust*. Is he going to come along and try and tempt you with something that is evil? *Grossly evil*—right at first? *No! He’s going to come along and tempt you with something that really sounds good!* Or something which may appear to be a very good cause—and get you hooked! But he appeals to the lust.

Verse 15: “And after lust has conceived... [So here we see the steps of choices that are made

which then leads to sin. You don’t have to yield to that temptation. That’s why we covered earlier: ‘You bring every thought into captivity and cast down vain imaginations and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.’] ...after lust has conceived...” So it’s got to sound interesting. It’s got to sound good. You can take anything that you would like to take as an example. You could bring in illicit sex. You could bring in stealing. You could bring in lying. You could bring in other things about breaking the Sabbath, taking God’s name in vain, having idols, having other gods, all of those things would come along. And who would think in the Church of God brethren would fall victim to all of those things—but they have!

Notice the process: “...after lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin... [Now, remember this: at any point in the process you can stop! At any point in the process you can choose to stop and turn and go the right way! I’m so sick and tired of Anna Nicole Smith! But a perfect example of what we’re talking about here. All of these people are involved in lust and trying to get. And they’re being entrapped. And they could’ve, at any point, said ‘NO!’ So could she. No to drugs! No to sex! No to notoriety!] ...and sin, when it is completely finished, **brings forth death**” (v 15). She died. Her son died. I mean, look at all the things associated with it. Surely there’s got to be something more important in the world than all the things of Anna Nicole Smith!

So then he says here, v 16—very important!: “Do not deceive yourselves... [Because that’s when we get ourselves in trouble—when we deceive ourselves.] ...my beloved brethren. Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will, He begat us by *the Word of Truth*, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings” (vs 16-18). So notice where he started out and where he ended up here in v 18. So regardless of what you go through, **keep your mind on God!**

Now, we’ll look at some other things in tempting God here in just a little bit. And trials and let’s see the result of that.

(go to the next track)

Let’s go to Luke, the fourth chapter, and let’s see what Jesus told Satan in a misuse of the Scriptures in declaring an action to be done from a misquoting of Scriptures—and how that tempts God. Let’s pick it up here in Luke 4:9: “Then he [Satan] led Him to Jerusalem and set Him upon the edge of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here... [Now, could he do that? *Yes he could*. Would it be right to do so?

Why would it not be right? Who's doing the requesting? *Satan is*. So if Jesus, in any of these things, did what Satan said to do, He would forsake the true God—the Father—and He would have another god before Him—correct? *Yes!*] ...For it is written... [quoting Scripture]: “He shall give His angels charge concerning You to keep You; And in *their* hands they shall bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.” But Jesus answered *and* said to him, ‘It is *clearly* stated... [I’ve inserted the word ‘clearly’ because it’s emphatic] ...“You shall not tempt *the* Lord your God”’” (vs 9-12).

So, you can tempt God by doing things which appear to you to be right and yet, what you’re really doing, you’re telling God what to do. Now, if there’s an accident that comes along, yes, God’s angels will protect you. But if you say, ‘Oh God, send your angels to protect me and stand right out on the railroad tracks with one of these bullet trains—like they have in France—coming at you 200-mph and ask God to protect you, it isn’t going to happen. You’re tempting God!

Now let’s see the difference between that and the ‘trying of our faith.’ Let’s come to 1-Peter, the first chapter. Now whenever we go through and study the Word of God, I want you to notice something that’s very, very important—not only in the model prayer of Matt. 6 and Luke 11, but also in all the prayers in the Psalms. There is always hope that is given, regardless of the circumstances or how bad it may be, there is always hope that God gives. Never forget that! So, whatever trial you’re going through, keep your mind on *the hope that God gives*.

Now, let’s just pick it up here in 1-Peter 1:1—we’ll read a few verses here: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *the* elect strangers scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; *Who have been chosen* according to the predetermined knowledge of God *the* Father, by sanctification through *the* Spirit... [Now that’s why we are called ‘saints.’ Saints means this: *one who has been sanctified by God having been called and chosen and received the Holy Spirit—you are a saint*. Not in the terms that the Catholics refer to: those souls in heaven who supposedly were righteous.] ...through *the* Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of *the* blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you.... [Now notice, **declaration, promise, hope.**] ...Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again **unto a living hope** through *the* resurrection of Jesus Christ from *the* dead; unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us... [which Christ is going to bring. No man can take it. No man can steal it. No man can deprive you of it—

unless you give up on God and walk away.] ...Who *are* being safeguarded by *the* power of God **through faith**...” (vs 1-5).

Now, another thing in our relationship with God and the Spirit of God and the Word of God is this: We need to understand the close, interaction that God is having with us with His Spirit. Because He’s leading us with His Spirit in many way—and many times we don’t realize that God is really doing it. Many times we can look back later and see after the fact, yes, God was leading us in it.

So we’re “...safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time. In this you yourselves greatly rejoice... [Now notice: Look at all that He has given here:

- to give hope
- to give inspiration
- to uplift you

—before He starts talking about the difficulties and trials that they’re going through. And you’ll find this same pattern throughout the whole Bible. Look, even at the most disastrous thing that happened during the days of Noah. There was hope for physical life through Noah and his sons and their wives, and all the animals that God brought to the Ark. So likewise, whenever we go through a trial, look to it for the hope, because here’s what it is doing] (v 6): ...though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials... [what for?] ...in order that the proving of your faith... [Because if God is going to give us eternal life, He wants to prove our faith:

- Do we love God?
- Do we believe God?
- Do we live by His Word?
- Do we act upon it?
- What is it?

As we’ll see, we’ll summarize some points on what trials do. “In order that the proving of your faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ...” (v 7). That’s when Jesus returns.

Now here’s the key. This is why you have to love God, believe His Word and so forth: “Whom, not having seen, you love... [Now, Peter saw Him, right? The apostle saw Him—right? *Yes!*] ...in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe... [And what did Jesus say to Thomas? And Thomas said, ‘Well, I won’t believe until I can put my finger in His hands and my hand in His side.’ Jesus said, ‘Thomas, come here.’ And he said, ‘Oh, my Lord, my God.’ And He said,

‘Blessed are you because you believe. But blessed are those who believe and have not seen.’ So there’s an additional blessing that comes in believing and loving though you haven’t seen.] ...not having seen, you love *and* rejoice with unspeakable joy, and filled with glory; *and are* receiving the end of your faith— *even the* salvation of *your* souls...” (vs 8-9).

So the whole point in everything that we go through is to give us the strength to prove our faith and everything like that. You can put in your notes there: Gen. 22—about Abraham and Isaac and offering Isaac and so forth. Where God said after Abraham proved that he was going to follow God in everything, even to the offering of his son, whom he counted God worthy to resurrect him if it went through. When it was all done the angel said, ‘Don’t raise your hand against the son. For NOW I KNOW that you fear Me, because you have withheld from Me your son, your only son.’ So these things are necessary because of what God is giving us and how great it is.

Now here are the things that trials and faith are intended to do. Now coupled with prayer, all of this has to do with constant praying, yielding to God and so forth. They are to *give us further belief* in God:

1. *believe* God
2. *obey* God
3. *love* God
4. *trust* God—not yourself
5. Show the *deliverance* and *salvation* of God

Now let’s look at some of these things that are important for us to understand. Let’s come over here to Exodus 17:1. Let’s look a little bit more concerning tempting God. So we’re going to look at some things which then they didn’t learn to believe. “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there was* no water for the people to drink.... [Now think about how many times they had seen the power of God. All the plagues, all the signs, all the things that He did in Egypt, all the killing of the firstborn, bringing them out, crossing the Red Sea, making the waters sweet where they were bitter, sending them manna—all of those things.] ...Wherefore the people did chide... [or contended or were complaining] ...with Moses, and said, ‘Give us water that we may drink.’ And Moses said unto them, ‘Why chide you with me? wherefore do you tempt the LORD?’” (vs 1-2).

Rather than going to Moses and saying, ‘Moses, we know God is with you. We know God is leading us. We know that God can do all things. We’re all out of water, we need water, will you pray

to God that He’ll provide water for us?’ Rather, coming to God with an accusative attitude, and tempting God. So whenever you come to God with an accusative attitude, you’re tempting God. Think of it that way. “And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, ‘Wherefore *is* this *that* you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?’” (v 3). Then you know the rest of the story—God gave them water out of the rock, whatever they needed.

But when you come to God with a terrible and wrong attitude, you’re tempting God. Now, let’s see this again in Malachi, the third chapter. Almost the same and we have seen this in our day, haven’t we? With ministers in the Church of God who betrayed God, betrayed the brethren, betrayed the Church, and went out and brought in the world. And went lock, stock and barrel with the evangelical, Protestantism of this world. And here’s how they did it—just like back here in Exo. 17. Malachi 3:13: “...Your words have been stout against Me...”

And I never will forget how that—I know in analyzing this down through the years—we would watch and see what was happening. And when they’re about ready to do something of a drastic nature, they don’t start out with a drastic thing right at first. They save that for last. And the minister who succeeded and took over the Worldwide Church of God—I think it was his son that took over—and before they made the announcement that they said it was okay to eat unclean foods, some brethren went into the Red Lobster down in Pasadena and lo and behold guess who was sitting there? *The son*, ‘*T. Jr.*’, *eating unclean fish*. And someone came over to him and said, ‘We aren’t supposed to eat this are we? Why are you eating this?’ And he says, ‘Oh, I’m a Gentile.’ And then after that came all the things of ‘stout words’ and hatefulness toward God, the Sabbath, everything that the Church stood for. So here it is:

Verse 13: “‘Your words have been stout against Me,’ says the LORD. ‘Yet you say, “What have we spoken *so much* against You?” You have said, “It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is* it that we have kept his ordinance... [or that is, kept His commandments, kept His Holy Days, have done the things of God: ‘what profit is it?'] ...and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy... [Completely turned the tables.] ...yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered”’” (vs 13-15). And isn’t that the message that came along? *Yes!* You don’t have to do this, you don’t have to do that, and now they have just ordained their first woman preacher. So you see what happens there. This is tempting God. When

you go against what you know and complain against God, against the things that are right, then you're tempting God.

Now let's see another example of this. Let's come to Psalm 73, very instructive. Right now at the present time, I'm going through my second pass through the Psalms and I tell you, it is really something going through the Psalms verse-by-verse, word-by-word, examining everything, make sure that it's right and so forth. Asaph was one of the Levites who helped administer the Ark of the Covenant in the tent that David put in his house. So he had Asaph and other Levites to attend it. They were all Levites who were priests. And this Psalm, though we've covered it in the past, is really instructive for our day.

Psalm 73:1: "Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.... [So he starts out with a good statement.] ...But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish... [Instead of comparing yourself with God, as we should, he was comparing himself with others in the world. And what does God say about comparing yourself with others. Those who compare themselves among themselves are what? *Not wise*.] ...I was envious at the foolish *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men... [They're not going through trials like me. Just wait, their trial is coming.] ...neither are they plagued like *other* men.... [And when he's saying 'other men' he's referring to his own personal circumstances is what he's doing here.] ...Therefore, pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them *as* a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness... [In other words they have everything that they need.] ...they have more than heart could wish" (vs 1-7).

Now I remember watching one of these programs, I think it was Discovery—you get sick and tired of the arguing on the news. They don't bring you news anymore, they argue back and forth to create opinions and to polarize people. They don't bring news anymore. So I channel-surf, I'm about ready to wear out my third remote-control, and so I channel-surf and I came to this one which was showing about the great yachts of the world, of the excessively, filthy rich and some of their play-toys. The biggest one that they showed, cost over \$500-million, just for a yacht. It's got everything in it, four or five stories, huge suites, huge lounges and rooms and spas and everything that you could want. All automatic, just almost flick a finger and something happens. You have a crew there always and they provide for you the best of food, they bring in flowers on the day that you leave on the trip and

they take you out on a cruise on the Mediterranean and you are wined and you are dined and I thought of this Psalm. I thought to myself, what is going to happen when their day comes, so absolutely just overflowing with abundance—filthy rich. The greatest of every pleasure and leisure you would ever want and people waiting on you hand and foot.

"...they have more than their heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.... [And many of those who own those and have all the billions of dollars, there's a good number of atheists and those who don't believe in God. They have everything that they want.] ...Therefore, his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them. And they say, 'How does God know?.... [Now I wonder how many of them really make money off of drugs? Off of interests that they earn in banks? And mortgages? And things like this.] ...and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches" (vs 7-12).

And then we have a little pity-party. Have you ever had a pity-party? You know what a pity-party is? *Boo Hoo, woe is me!* God is not fair! Yes, get out the violin and sort of play the sad song. Now when you have a pity-party God is going to hold you accountable for it, sooner or later.

Notice: "Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.... [I just can't seem to get away from it.] ...If I say, 'I will speak thus'; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me... [You look at the iniquities of the world and everything like that. That's why God has us in our prayers start out, 'Our Father Who is in heaven.' We look up, we don't look down. We don't compare ourselves with other people. Now there is a way out of a pity-party. Now here Asaph, who took care of the Ark in David's house where he had that little tent. So he was complaining, but God led him to his senses.] ...until I went into the sanctuary of God... [That's right into where the Ark of the Covenant was. Now, likewise with us. You can get over your pity-party by really praying to God in right way because you have access to God the Father in heaven above and into the sanctuary in heaven above, don't you? Then God gives understanding.] ...until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end" (vs 13-17).

Now let's take a look again, let's do a little scenario with this great, huge, \$500-million yacht. And here you have all of your corrupt friends with

you. All of your drinking and sex parties and everything that you will have out there on this—actually, it's more like a ship than a yacht. What are you going to do if you get in a storm and it sinks? *Everything's gone!* What are you going to do if you are the victim of an assassination because someone wants your money and they've planted a bomb on that, and when you get out into a certain location in the depths of the ocean? Ka-Phooee! *It's gone!* So just think of it that way. Understand their end! Understand your end! Your end is what? *The resurrection and eternal life*—compared to their end when you tie that in with Luke 15 and Lazarus and the rich man. What happened to the rich man? *Well, he rejected God because of his wealth*—and he was facing the lake of fire—correct? *Yes!* So look at the end. Never consider what the beginning may be or the present state may be.

“...then understood I their end. Surely You did set them in slippery places: You cast them down into destruction. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment!... [I want you to think about this: How is going to feel when you are resurrected and you're on your way up to the Sea of Glass; and you get there on the Sea of Glass; all the events that take place and God says, 'All right, now is the time for My vengeance. Now is the time for the destruction of Babylon the Great'—and we're all going to witness it before we come back to the earth. Think of all the wealth, all the riches. You go back and read that in Rev. 18 and Jer. 50 & 51—everything that they had is going to be gone!

- God is going to give us the true riches.
- God is going to give us eternal life.
- God is going to give us a new name.
- God is going to give us a crown of righteousness.

...they are utterly consumed with terrors” (vs 17-19)—put in your margin there, Rev. 16.

Now here's where he came to his senses: “As a dream when *one* awakes; so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.... [So God led him to repentance—right? What do you do when you have a bad attitude? *Go to God and say, 'God, I have a bad attitude, help me to overcome it.'* **Take it to God in prayer.** Don't wait till you get over your bad attitude. What guarantee are you going to have that you're going to get over your bad attitude on your own. Because you got into a bad attitude on your own, what makes you think you're going to overcome it on your own. Well, you may in degree, but this is what happened to Asaph.] ...So foolish *was* I, and ignorant... [because of thinking like this.] ...I was *as* a beast before You” (vs 20-22). So he came to his senses.

And one of the very important things in prayer that we need to understand is that we understand how great God is—not only what He's going to do for us, but also the more that we understand the vileness of our own nature and our own motives and our own thoughts without the Spirit of God to lead us, then we understand how terrible we really are as human beings. Now, some people get discouraged in that—*don't!* because it's God helping you overcome it.

So he says, v 23: “Nevertheless I *am* continually with You... [now then, He understood.] ...You have held *me* by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.... [So always consider the end.] ...Whom have I in heaven *but* You? and *there* is none upon earth *that* I desire beside You.... [So you see what happens when repentance comes. You see how the whole heart and mind and attitude is changed, right? And that's what we need to accomplish in prayer, brethren. That's the thing.] ...My flesh and my heart fails: *but* God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You. But *it is* good... [here's the final analysis. Any trial, any difficulty, any bad attitude, anything that comes along that brings you back to God.] ...for me to **draw near to God:** I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works” (vs 23-28). That's quite a thing—isn't it? *Yes, indeed!*

Now let's look at something else that's important for us to realize. Let's come to Psalm 66, since we're here in the Psalms—and this is one, when I was doing the editing and also having in mind the sermon, that just jumped out at me and helped me to understand even more. Now, let's tie that in with what we just covered there in Psa. 73.

Psalm 66:16: “Come *and* hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue.... [Keeping his mind on God.] (Now, v 18 is the key thing): ...**If I regard iniquity in my heart...** [in other words, if you're seeking your own will rather than the will of God; or if you have iniquity in your heart and you are paying attention to that and then is yielding to lust and it's going to bring forth and conceive sin, and so forth.] ...**the Lord will not hear me:**” (vs 16-18). Isn't that something?!

Now, we'll see how this came about with Job. We won't have time to get into that today. But isn't that, I think, very meaningful? A perfect example of that is Cain—right? You're going to see that we refer a lot to Cain because if you regard iniquity in your heart—and really what you want is your own way—and you're asking God to give His

stamp of approval to you in what you're doing and thinking, God isn't going to hear you. He'll let you fall to your own devices for a while. I thought that that was really something.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*: *But* verily God has heard *me*; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed *be* God, Who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me" (vs 18-20). So if you love God and do the things the way that God wants them done, ***He will hear your prayers.***

Let's come to Hebrews, the fourth chapter. Let's see how we can overcome this by having confidence and the power of God's Spirit to do so. Here's how we are to come before God. Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God *is* living and powerful... [That's really a fantastic thing to understand. There is no other book in the world that you can read and study, which will convict you of sin.] ...and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart.... [This is why prayer is very important; why we come to God on His terms, not ours. Why we repent to Him and He not to us.] ...And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but all things *are* naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account. Having therefore a great High Priest... [Now this is not to scare you away; this is not to turn you from God, but this is to ***draw you to God.***] ...*Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession of *our faith*. For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *one Who* was tempted in all things according to *the likeness of our own temptations*; yet *He was* without sin. Therefore... [here's the conclusion of it.] ...we should ***come with boldness*** to the throne of grace... [confidence, understanding, faith, love, hope, boldness] ...***so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need***" (vs 12-16). So if you have a pity-party, go to God and He'll take care of it for you.

Old Testament Scriptures from the *King James Version*
New Testament Scriptures from *The New Testament in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural references:

- 1) Matthew 6:9-10
- 2) Colossians 1:11-13
- 3) Philippians 3:20-21
- 4) Matthew 6:10-13
- 5) James 1:1-18
- 6) Luke 4:9-12
- 7) 1 Peter 1:1-9
- 8) Exodus 17:1-3

- 9) Malachi 3:13-15
- 10) Psalm 73:1-28
- 11) Psalm 66:16-20
- 12) Hebrews 4:12-16

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Luke 11
- Genesis 4
- Mark 4
- Matthew 5:48
- Deuteronomy 30
- Genesis 22
- Revelation 18, 16
- Jeremiah 50, 51

Also referenced: Sermon Series: *Why God Hates Religion*

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