

Praying When You're Powerless

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

Date: 03 September 2017

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0:00] It's so good to see you all here this morning.

This has been a crazy, I was going to say a week, but it's been more than a week really. This has been a really crazy time for all of us, for everybody here, for most of the people that you know, unless they live far off, most of the people that you know, your family members, your co-workers, your friends, and certainly your neighbors, this has been a trying time.

It's been really difficult, and you can't escape what's happening already, even if you stayed dry, even if you didn't have any damage, or no one in your immediate family had any damage to their homes or lost anything, you can't escape the situation.

It's on television 24-7. It's on Facebook. Everywhere you turn, you read of friends and others who've lost, and so we're surrounded and facing a time that's really trying, not just physically.

I mean, there's a lot of physical work to be done. There's a lot of help that needs to be given to people around us. It's physically taxing, yes, but more so than that, it taxes your heart at times to see the pain and the heartbreak and the suffering and the loss of others around you.

[1:35] And if you're like me, then one of the feelings that you've had over the last several days that I have felt numerous times, and that I know some of you have felt because I've read what you've said on Facebook, or we've had conversations either in person or on the phone, and there's this feeling of powerlessness at times.

And I know that that feeling creeps up because so many people have said, I don't know what to do. What do I do? How do I help? Who can I assist? And that's become a little more clear as the days have passed.

Now that cleanup has begun in a lot of places, it's a little bit more clear what we can actually go out, some of us, and physically do. But in the midst of the storm, when everything was going on, and you're seeing tragedy after tragedy on the television, and you're sitting at home, and for many of you, if you were like me, you just felt a sense of, there's nothing I can do.

There's nothing I can do to help these people. At one point, when the rain sort of led up towards the end of the storm, we got in our car and we drove sort of to the back of our neighborhood to where another neighborhood begins because we knew that there was flooding there closer to the river, and we just thought maybe there's something we can do.

And so we went back there, and one of the roads had been sort of converted into a boat ramp because, you know, it was above water here, and it went straight down into the water. And there was just a line of boat trailers and boats getting into the water of people going out to rescue.

[3:01] So I parked the car, and I got out, and I began to walk around to see if there was anything I could do. And it only took a few minutes to realize, no, every boat has two or three men in it. They don't need another man.

They just get in the way. And I don't have anything to use. There's nothing that I can do here. And so after several minutes, I got back in the car, and we drove home, and then there's that feeling again of, what do I do?

How can I help? How can I serve people? And you can, if you're not careful, you can, in crises like these, you can have a sense of powerlessness just come over you, a sense of almost desperation and frustration, not merely that people are suffering around you, but that you can't fix it, that you can't help at that time.

Yes, there may be a time later on when you can help, but in the moment, you know, and you feel, and you sense, and you know with certainty, there's nothing I can really do with my hands in this moment.

And this morning, I want to talk, I want us to think through and look at the scriptures to ask the question, what should we do when we're powerless? What should we do when there are people around us that we want desperately to help, but there's nothing that we can practically in that moment really do for them?

[4:19] How do we respond and how do we go about things? And so we're going to look this morning in Genesis chapter 18. I'm not simply just trying to move ahead in the book of Genesis, but by God's providence, we land at a spot where Abraham is faced with a similar situation where he's powerless to help his neighbors.

There's not really a lot that he can do to fix the situation. Now, before we go and read the text, though, I want to sort of start with a little bit of a warning, because we are looking in chapter 18 at the at sort of the beginning of the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Justin was was doing some things on the stage this morning. I was sitting right here on the front and he said, hey, you're not just moving ahead in Genesis and talking about when, you know, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah this morning, are you?

I said, well, not exactly. It's not entirely appropriate to talk about God's judgment on these cities as he destroyed them when we're facing all of these things. And and there there often, though, is this temptation for people, especially when we're in the midst of that sense of powerlessness that we can't do anything to find a person or a group or or something to push the blame off on, because if you can blame someone that may at least allow you to say, well, even though I can't help right now, at least I'm not the cause of the problems and I can point to the person who is the cause and I know it's because of them.

And people do that. You see, you see every time there is a major event like this, that there will be voices who want to try and pin the blame on someone or or some group.

[5:59] I can remember when when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, I can remember some people claim to get standing and saying, well, it's because of the immorality of the city. That's why that's why the hurricane is struck in New Orleans.

That's why God picked that city. And that's why the storm swept through there. It's because it's such an immoral place. And no doubt there will be people when any when any major event strikes a strike to a large city, because you can point at any large city and see sinfulness that people will begin to point in those directions.

But I've even I've even read articles this week sort of from the other direction, from from those arguing, well, the reason why the flooding is so terrible in the Houston area and in Texas is because they're the ones who contributed to global warming.

They're filled with the oil industry. They're the ones who don't want regulations. And it's their fault that they built their cities in this way. And that it's that impulse to put the blame on someone on someone else, whether you come from what we might call the more conservative position and you want to blame the sin of the people who live in that area or you come from a more left leaning position and you want to blame it on on their effect on the environment or their lack of regulation.

It doesn't really matter. We all have this tendency to want in a crisis to place to place to place blame. And of course, when we come to a passage where we're looking at God's judgment rain down upon several cities in the ancient world, we we might at times feel vindicated in and justified in moving in that direction.

[7:34] So before we even get into the text this morning, I want us to hear a warning from Jesus himself, because the way to react when a tragedy strikes is not to try to blame someone.

It's not to try to point the finger and figure out why this has happened. That's that's not what we what we ought to do. Hold your place there in Genesis chapter 18. I want you to turn all the way in the New Testament to the book of Luke, Luke chapter 13, where Jesus is actually asked about a tragedy where where a number of people were killed in a shocking manner.

And I want you to see his response. Luke chapter 13, verse one. There was some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

So it's a tragic, shocking thing. These people had been killed. Verse two, he answered them. Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?

Do you think that? And he answers, no, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And then he cites another example. Or those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them.

[8:50] Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Jesus' approach to this kind of this finger pointing is not to absolve everybody and say, no, no, no, no, no.

People don't deserve it. Bad things just shouldn't happen to anybody. Jesus doesn't deny the fact that we are all sinful. He doesn't deny the fact that all of us need to repent of things. But he does say and he does point out, don't assume that when tragedy strikes a group of people over here that it's because they're worse than you are.

And we need to be aware of that. We need that caution. We need that warning, especially as we approach a passage in which Abraham is responding, yes, to a crisis. And yes, he is, as we are, powerless in the midst of that crisis to a certain extent.

But our circumstances don't reflect his in every way. Abraham is actually privy to inside information. God reveals to Abraham what he's going to do and why he's going to do it.

So Abraham has information that we don't have access to. We don't know. God doesn't reveal to us the secret things. Those belong to the Lord. We don't know why this city and not this city or why this house and not that house, this street and not that street.

[10:10] We don't know those sorts of things. We aren't given the sort of inside information that Abraham is given. And yet we can still learn from the way that Abraham responds to the crisis that he's that he's facing.

So let's dive in here in Genesis chapter 18. I want to begin in verse 16 and we'll read all the way down to the end of the chapter. If you all, would you stand to your feet as we read God's word this morning? We begin just after the Lord and the two angels who so far just called the men, just after they revealed to Abraham and to Sarah that they're to have a son.

And then we're told this, then the men, that's the two angels, set out from there and they looked down towards Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way.

The Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.

For I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he's promised him.

[11:20] Then the Lord said, because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave. I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me.

And if not, I will know. So the men turned from there and went towards Sodom. But Abraham still stood before the Lord. Then Abraham drew near and said, will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

Suppose there are 50 righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the 50 righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked so that the righteous fare as the wicked.

Far be it from you. Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just? And the Lord said, if I find at Sodom 50 righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.

Abraham answered and said, behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of 50 righteous are lacking.

[12:28] Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it if I find 45 there. Again, he spoke to him and said, suppose 40 are found there.

He answered, for the sake of 40, I will not do it. Then he said, oh, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak. Suppose 30 are found there. He answered, I will not do it if I find 30 there.

He said, behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose 20 are found there. He answered, for the sake of 20, I will not destroy it.

Then he says, oh, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak again. But this once suppose 10 are found there. He answered, for the sake of 10, I will not destroy it.

And the Lord went his way when he had finished speaking to Abraham and Abraham returned to his place. You guys take a seat. How does Abraham respond when he's faced with a crisis about which practically he can do nothing?

[13:38] He's been told directly by the Lord in verse 20 that God is going to rain down judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God has told him, God has revealed in advance exactly what is going to happen to these cities.

And yet, Abraham is at a place where he can't do anything about it. And I think the reason is twofold. Number one, because the Lord has said, I'm going to do this. And what's he going to do to stop God from doing what God has said he's going to do?

There's not really anything that he can do. But in addition to that, we've already been told in this chapter that Abraham is old. Abraham is advanced in years. Yes, he will live a few more decades, but he is, for all practical purposes, he is by now an old man.

And so what he was able to do previously, he can no longer do. Previously, when the city of Sodom came under attack, when it was facing its own destruction, and Abraham's nephew Lot was nearby, Abraham was able, he was able-bodied and he could do something about it.

And he went and he defeated the invading kings and he rescued Lot and he rescued the city of Sodom. Abraham has been the rescuer of Sodom before. He has done it.

[14:55] He has stood there and he has gone out and he has put his hands to work and he has fought for his neighbors and especially for his nephew Lot. But that was a while ago.

And those were just, those were mere human kings. As powerful as they were, they were mere human kings. Now he's an older man. And now, he's not facing a crisis brought about by invaders, but he's facing a crisis brought about by the determination of God himself.

And so Abraham is practically speaking of what he can do with his hands, how he can actually go out and prevent this from happening or rescue those who are in danger.

Practically speaking, Abraham is powerless. And in that, I believe that we should be able to connect to him and to relate to him. There's nothing you can do when a neighborhood down the street or a city across town is facing catastrophic flooding.

There's nothing you can do when you get a text message or a phone call from a relative, even if they're only a few miles away, when they are surrounded by water and the water's rising.

- [16 : 19] Oftentimes, there's not a lot you can do unless you have a boat and unless you have people to help you. There's not a lot you can do. And most of us found ourselves in that exact situation over the last several days, wanting to help people, sometimes those we knew, sometimes strangers that we saw on the news, wanting to do something, but powerless to do anything.

Much like Abraham, knowing what's coming, knowing it's going to continue to get worse, and yet unable to intervene, unable to stop the floodwaters. Abraham, unable to prevent what's coming to Sodom and Gomorrah.

And yet, what we find as we begin to read in verse 22 on down to the end of this chapter is that though practically, with his hands and his feet and with what he was able to physically go out and do, Abraham was powerless.

There still yet remained for Abraham a much greater power than he could ever possess by the strength of his own hands. Because Abraham is still able to pray.

Abraham can still intercede on behalf of those who are facing disaster. He may not be able to physically stand in the way, but he can, in a sense, stand in the way, and he can stand in the gap, and he can speak on their behalf, which is exactly what Abraham does.

- [17 : 44] Abraham does not shrug his shoulders and say, I guess since there's nothing I can do, I'll just sit back and I'll watch from the mountaintop as the fire rains down, and maybe afterwards I'll go look and see what the aftermath is.

That's not Abraham's response. Abraham's response is to begin to pray and beg the Lord for help. Notice verse 22.

So the men, that's the angels, turned from there and went towards Sodom. Now what is Abraham's reaction? But Abraham still stood before the Lord.

Then Abraham drew near and said. Abraham stood before the Lord and Abraham spoke to the Lord. Abraham is acting as an intercessor.

Abraham is interceding on behalf of his neighbors in another city. Abraham is standing and praying for the lives of many people that he probably doesn't know.

- [18 : 49] Abraham is standing and praying for his family, for Lot, and for Lot's daughters, and sons-in-law, and whoever else is connected with Lot in the city. Abraham is standing and praying and interceding on their behalf.

Abraham shows us, how do you respond when you're practically powerless? You respond by tapping into a far, far greater power.

You go and you pray and you intercede on behalf of others. I think we can learn more than just the fact that we need to intercede.

I think there are a few things that we can glean from the way that Abraham goes about praying on behalf of the people of Sodom, and ultimately praying on behalf of his family, of Lot, of his nephew.

I think that there are some things that we can learn about the way that Abraham approaches the Lord here. And the first thing that I think that we need to learn from this is, Abraham approaches God in a humble manner.

[19:52] He does. He doesn't come arrogantly. He doesn't come demanding. He doesn't come assuming that God is bound to do whatever he wants God to do. He doesn't pray like that.

There's no sort of name-it-and-claim-it philosophy at work here for Abraham. He's not saying, God, do this. You ought to do this. No, he's coming and he's humbly asking God, God, would you please, would you please intercede?

I know that I don't even deserve to ask. I don't deserve to be able to come before you, and yet I'm coming. Notice some of the things that he says.

He says in verse 27, Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Now, I want you to notice the word Lord there has a capital L, but after that they're lowercase, unlike the word Lord previously in this paragraph, in this chapter.

Because here, Abraham is addressing the Lord as the sovereign one. I've undertaken to speak to my king. He's conferring upon God a title of honor, recognizing you're in a position of power, and I'm in a position of weakness.

[21:03] I've actually had the audacity to speak to the Lord, to Adonai, to the sovereign one. I, who am but dust and ashes.

He comes humbly. And if we want to be heard by God, if we want a hearing from Him, the first thing that we need to do as we begin to pray on behalf of others is that we need to come without demands, without assumptions, but come rather in humility because God delights to hear and respond to those who are humble.

Hold your place in Genesis. I want you to turn over to the New Testament to see a picture of this. Turn over to 1 Peter chapter 5. In 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 6, this may be a passage that you're familiar with, but Peter commands and he says, Humble yourselves.

Humble yourselves. Therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you. And then notice, how do you humble yourself?

What do you do? Casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. You come humbly before the Lord when you come admitting that I'm powerless.

[22:24] I have these great cares and concerns and worries that overwhelm me and there's nothing I can do about them. And so I come not because I have a claim upon you.

I come not because I have the right to demand anything of you. I come because I have needs. I come because I'm unable to do anything about the problems that I face.

I have anxieties. I cast them before you and ask you to do something about them. Abraham comes and says, I'm just dust and ashes.

You're the king. You're the sovereign. You're in charge. I come and I'm begging you. And we're going to approach the Lord in a similar manner. We're going to approach the Lord not making demands.

Not saying, God, how could you do this? God, what do you think you're doing? God, you need to stop. God, you need, you must intervene. And we need to come humbly and say, I don't deserve to even be speaking to you.

[23:26] But I don't have anywhere else to turn. I don't have anywhere else to go. So I'm begging you, hear me. Listen and answer.

When we come humbly before the Lord, He delights to hear the prayers of His people. He delights in it. But not only does Abraham come humbly, but something else I think that we can learn from Abraham here is that he doesn't just ask simply once and then walk away.

Hey God, would you mind? Here's an issue here. I need you to take care of this. Help this person, please. And then Abraham's done his part. He's prayed. And then he sort of walks away.

I'm afraid that sometimes we approach our prayer life in that way. As if it's an obligation that we have, rather than a great privilege that we have been granted by God.

So that we sort of, we say our prayers, we get them out of the way. Well, I told so and so I would pray for them, so I need to sit down and pray for them. And we pray for them, and then we move on. We're finished with the situation.

[24:30] It's over and done with for us. We've said our prayer. And yet that's not how God desires us to pray. That doesn't show God what our actual cares and anxieties and worries are.

When you're deeply burdened by something, when you actually really care about something, do you pray about it once and then move on? Of course you don't. Of course not. You come over and over to the Lord.

You come before Him and you beg Him and you push as far as you can. And you say, God, please, God, please intervene. And you don't stop. And Abraham doesn't stop.

We almost, sometimes we chuckle as we read through here because it almost seems silly. Hey, God, if there's 50. Yeah, sure. What about 45? Yeah, okay. What about 40?

Oh, yeah. 30? Yeah, sure, 30. 20? Yeah, 20. Let me try again. What about 10? Yes, Abraham.

[25:26] Fine. 10. And we almost laugh as if, as if, Abraham, what are you doing? Why are you doing this? Why are you just whittling it down? But what we're really seeing here, demonstrated by Abraham, is a persistence in prayer that many times is necessary.

It's absolutely necessary. Jesus teaches us that it's the exact same thing as He speaks to His disciples and shares with them a parable about a woman who just would not stop asking for help from those who were in charge of her.

Turn over again to Luke, if you would. This time in Luke chapter 18. In Luke chapter 18, verse 1, we're told that Jesus told them a parable.

Now listen, to the effect, here's the reason for the parable, that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. If we can say anything about Abraham during this exchange, he doesn't lose heart.

He doesn't say, well, I asked and we'll just see what happens. He doesn't lose heart. He continues. He's persistent. And then here's the parable. In a certain city, there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.

[26:33] And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, give me justice against my adversary. For a while, he refused. But afterward, he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

And the Lord said, hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? If an unjust, unrighteous judge will answer this woman's pleas because she's persistent in coming before him, will not God give justice to his people, to his elect?

Will God not hear us if we're persistent in our praying? And I know that sometimes this confuses us. This doesn't make sense. We think to ourselves, yeah, but I mean, I mean, I told him once, it's not as if God forgets stuff.

I mean, God knows what I need. He knows what I want. I've already asked him, why do I have to continue to come before him? Why do I have to continue to ask, why is persistence necessary?

Because persistence is natural in those who actually really are desperate for God to intervene. If you're not persistent in your prayers, if you don't, if you stop, if you just kind of give it a one-time go at it, that reveals that your heart doesn't really and truly long for that for which you are praying.

[28:00] It's a heart issue. When we desperately want God to intervene and rescue someone, we will keep asking and keep asking, not because we think that God is forgetful, not because we think that we need to badger God, but because it reveals how desperately we want them to be saved and rescued and delivered from whatever trouble they're in.

If we want to be good intercessors, if we want to be fruitful in our prayers on behalf of others, then we need to have a heart that actually longs for those prayers to be answered and a heart that longs for prayers on behalf of others to be answered will not stop and will not give up.

It will be persistent just as Abraham is here persistent. So we have to come humbly before God. We have to come acknowledging that we don't have a claim upon God, we don't have a right, but we need Him.

And then if we really perceive that need and we really see how desperate we are and we really long to see others rescued and helped, then we will come persistently over and over.

We will not give up as we approach God humbly and persistently. But the reason that we're able to do that, the reason that Abraham is able to make this kind of request of God is because Abraham understands who God is.

[29:27] Abraham has an understanding of what God is like. Notice, what are the grounds for Abraham's prayer? Look at verse 25. Just as he's first offered the prayer, suppose 50, and now here's his reason.

Far be it from you to do such a thing. That is, to judge the righteous along with the wicked. Far be it from you to do such a thing. To put the righteous to death with the wicked so that the righteous fare as the wicked.

Far be that from you. Now notice this phrase, this sentence. Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just? Now sometimes we read that sentence and we think that Abraham is questioning God's justice.

That Abraham is questioning God's righteousness. But I don't think that's what Abraham is doing at all. I think Abraham is pointing toward God's justice. He's pointing toward God's character, toward God's righteousness as the basis for his prayer.

I know that you are just. I know that you are righteous. So if you're righteous, you won't do this sort of thing, will you? You wouldn't act in that kind of a way.

[30:35] You wouldn't sweep away the righteous with the wicked. That's not who you are, God. And if we're going to have effective prayers prayed on behalf of ourselves and others, we need to pray on the basis of who God has actually revealed himself to be.

We can't make assumptions about God that do not align with what he reveals about himself in his word. We have to pray on the basis of an understanding of who God himself is.

Who is he? What does God desire? What does God want? What is God after? What is his character? And the more you understand the character of God, the more you become acquainted with just what sort of God he is, the better and more effectively will you be able to pray because you'll be able to pray in accordance with God's own desires and God's own will and God's own character and nature.

Let me illustrate this for you from the New Testament. Turn over to one of Paul's letters, 1 Timothy 2, where we are given a command. 1 Timothy 2, he says, First of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people.

He's being repetitious here. He's being repetitive. But he's doing that to get our attention. He uses four different words. Supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings.

[32 : 10] He wants us to pray on behalf of all people. And then he explains what he means by that. For kings and all who are in high positions. In other words, Paul doesn't want us to neglect to pray for anyone because of their social status, because of who they are.

I mean, he cites those that his readers would be the most likely to neglect in prayer. They would most likely neglect these rulers who are oftentimes a trouble for them and a problem for them.

They would probably not be inclined to intercede on behalf of those that they oftentimes regard as their enemy. And yet, Paul says, even for kings, even for those who are in high positions, those who are in authority, you must pray for them.

Don't leave anyone out. Don't set anyone aside because they don't look the way you want them to look or they don't belong to the social class that you want them to belong to because they're different from you.

No, pray for everybody. Don't leave them out. Don't leave them out. That we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

[33 : 15] This is good and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Do you realize there's not a class of people, there's not a group of people on the face of the earth that God does not desire to save?

We know that He's going to save people from every tribe, every people group, every language group, every nation. God's at work to do that.

God doesn't leave out any ethnic group. God doesn't leave out any race. God doesn't leave out any social group, any social class, anyone of any economic standing. God has a desire to save people from every group, even those that they would be least likely to pray for.

He says pray for them because God desires to save even them. God desires to do this. What is the ground of their praying for even kings and those in positions of authority?

What is the reason for that? Because, Paul says, understand that God, even from among them, He is desirous to save and rescue and deliver and deliver people.

[34 : 26] If we understand God's character, God's nature, God's revealed will in the Scriptures, then we will better be able to pray and intercede on behalf of others.

Abraham does not pray for the people of Sodom because he believes that they are all innocent. That's not what he does. No. Abraham prays because he believes that there may perhaps be some righteous people among them and he knows, he knows that God is just.

He knows that God is righteous and because he knows that God is just and God is righteous, he intercedes. He prays on behalf of others in accordance with what he knows about who God is.

There's something else revealed in this passage from 1 Timothy. Not only the grounds, the ultimate grounds, God's character and will and nature for our praying, but also the grounds for our confidence in praying.

If you continue to read on, you read in verse 5 that it begins 1 Timothy 2, verse 5 with the word for, which is the same word as the word because. So this is why.

[35 : 37] Why are you going to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving on behalf of all these different people? Why are you going to do it? What's the motive? What's going to move you to do this?

Why would you have any confidence in doing this? Because there's one God and there's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Do you understand that the reason that we can intercede on behalf of others is because we know and trust that Christ is continually and constantly interceding on behalf of us?

That the reason that we can approach God on behalf of others is because Christ is right now eternally interceding for us and praying for us to His Father?

That the reason that we ought to have confidence as we pray is not because we have a claim upon God, but because we have a mediator, because we have an intercessor, we have one who stands in our place pleading His blood, yes, for all those who've trusted in Him, but also pleading and carrying our prayers to His Father on our behalf.

[36 : 50] That's what Jesus does. That's what He's doing right now. Every time one of His followers prays, Jesus takes their prayers before His Father.

And the reason that we ought to be confident in praying is because we belong to Him. And if we belong to Him, He intercedes for us.

I believe that ultimately that's why Abraham is able to approach God with such boldness. Because He knows who He is. Look back in Genesis chapter 18.

When God decides that He's not going to hide from Abraham what He's about to do, He says in verse 19, for I have chosen Him. Literally, I have known Him.

That He may command His children and His household after Him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. In other words, I'm not going to hide this from Him because He belongs to me. This begins, Abraham is prompted to prayer because God begins by saying, Abraham is mine.

[38 : 02] And Abraham can come and pray to God, yes, humbly, but he can come also boldly because he knows that He is God's, that He belongs to Him. And if you have trusted in Christ and been delivered and rescued from your sins, you can have that same kind of boldness as you come before Him to know that you have an intercessor and that you have a mediator who brings your prayers before the Father and pleads His own blood and His own right to be heard as the only begotten Son of God.

Yes, we should come humbly before God, but we should also come with great boldness if we understand and know who it is that intercedes on our behalf.

we are, not just now, but in the future we will face circumstances where we can't fully explain why things are unfolding the way that they are.

We can't fully explain why something would happen the way that it's happening because we live in a fallen world.

We can't point to an individual's sins or a community's sins and say specifically this is why this disaster has happened to you. We can't do that. We don't know that. We're not privy to that sort of information.

[39 : 26] We ought not to do that. But we do know more generally and more broadly that the reason for the reason for all the disasters in the world, the reason for such a chaotic world, the reason for such a painful world filled with loss and death, the reason for that is sin.

I want you to hear these words from the Apostle Paul from Romans chapter 8. Paul says that the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption. And obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly.

We groan. The world, the creation itself, groans. Broadly, generally speaking, why is there, why do disasters strike?

[40 : 42] Why are there catastrophic events that take place in the world? Because the world has fallen. And because we live in a fallen world, we ourselves, even those who belong to Him, who He says have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan inwardly.

Even we, at times, will be overwhelmed by the corruption, by the futility, by the pain that surrounds us in the world.

Even we. And how do we respond? When we're powerless or when we are groaning? What do we do? How do we respond?

A few verses later, verse 26 of Romans 8, Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Even when we have run out of words to say, praying for others, praying for our own safety and deliverance, even when we ourselves have run out.

[41 : 56] We don't even know how to pray anymore because it's just, it's too overwhelming. There are too many separate scenes of destruction on the television. There are too many stories on social media.

There are just too many. We don't know what to say. Even in that moment, God is faithful to His people and the Spirit Himself begins to intercede for us.

We have a great mediator in Christ and then when we are left without the words to express to Christ, the Spirit comes and groans and intercedes on our behalf.

And that should give us courage. That should strengthen us. That should motivate us to constantly fall on our faces even when we feel powerless and tap into a greater power.

Even when we've run out of words to tap into a greater power and say, God, help. Even if you can do nothing but groan before God.

[43 : 00] Groan and the Spirit will intercede and He will transpose those groanings into prayers on behalf of yourself and those for whom you desperately long for God to intervene.

Let's pray. Let's pray.