



July 2, 2023

“What does Prayer change?”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

★ **Happy 4th** ★ **Welcome Sheeran Family** ★ **Church Camp August 24-27** ★

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The outworking of love for one another is ultimately the continued and ever-expanding agency available for the Will of God done on earth. That’s the “greater works” done by asking in Jesus’ name.

Ask anything in the name of Jesus and He will do it exactly as you ask. The corrective comes as both the means and the purpose of such prayer. The means is to pray in “Jesus’ name,” and the purpose is to “glorify the Father in Jesus.”

What’s the difference between a person using witchcraft to manipulate things more to their liking and a person using prayer to do the same?

To do that with Almighty God is not only witchcraft, it is outrageous arrogance, and it becomes contemptuous blasphemy.

The implication is that if we pray with enough fervency, frequency, and faith, along with the correct wording, God will be forced to comply.

The idea that God won't do good, unless we ask Him to do good, in the correct way, with the right posture, and with the proper formula.

All people are religious, and all religion is self-serving. It is always about something that the person does in order to propitiate some power in order to get their will done.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

There is only one belief system that is truly the opposite of that self-serving, “man in the middle,” human crafted fiction and that is Biblical Christianity.

True Biblical Christianity is never about gaining access to a genie in a bottle who will grant wishes, nor is it about avoiding “H, E, double toothpicks.”

It's about an eternal, glorious, familial relationship with the One and Only Creator God.

God and His Will are at the center. It is for man to conform to Him and His Will.

Heaven is not a place; it is a relationship. We experience Heaven now to the extent that we are unified with God and His Will.

Our prayers are to get us to accept His Will, which is to get us a little closer to Heaven. When you pray with that attitude then every prayer is answered by Almighty God with a resounding yes! Yes, I will accomplish My Will on earth just as it stands already in Heaven.

Amen in Greek is ἀμήν (ä-mān), Hebrew אָמֵן (ä-mān). It means truly, but the nuance is that because it is True, it is binding.

Our whole ending formula actually means that what I've just prayed, let it, and my own attitude, be in conformity to what God Wills and let that be true and binding upon me.

JOHN 14:15-31 (selected) ~

The Helper is παράκλητος (pä-řä-klā-tōs), with the basic idea of someone who is called alongside another for the purpose of assisting them. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead and He is the One Who enables you to become a Christian and then enables you to be a Christian.

He does it as the “Spirit of Truth” which always points you to “the Way and the Truth and the Life.” He is called the other Paraclete because Jesus was, and is, the first Paraclete.

Obedience is first of all to believe in Jesus (become a Christian) and second of all to love your fellow Christians in tangible acts of service (be a Christian). The Holy Spirit enables both.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____



Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Alêtheia
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ
ΘΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
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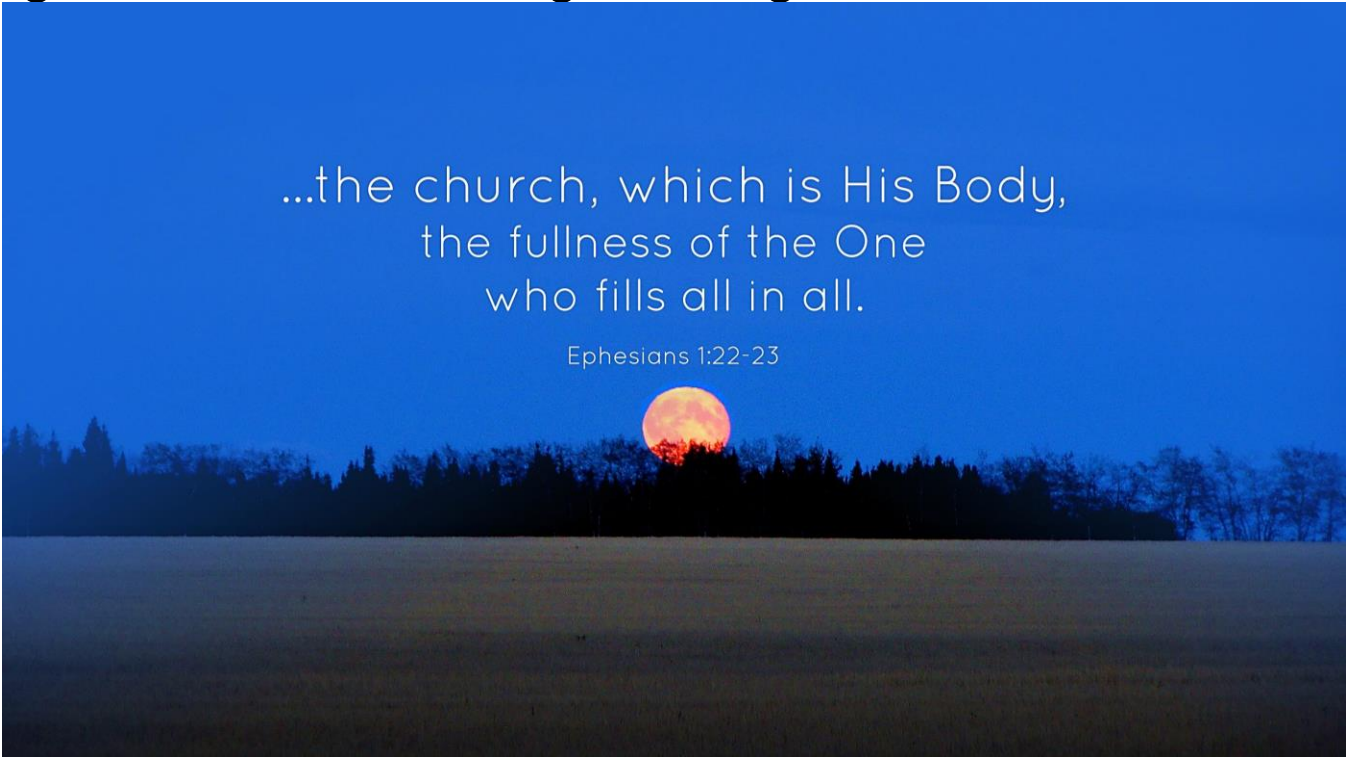
Farewell Discourse

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

JOHN 13:31 - 16:33

So far, in the Farewell Discourse, we've seen Jesus confirm that He is going away physically, that He wants His people busy in His absence loving each other as

He loves them. We also saw Jesus encouraging His disciples by assuring them that they would eventually be with Him for eternity because He, Himself, is the Way. Finally, we got a glimpse of the outworking of love for one another, namely the continued and ever-expanding agency for the Will of God done on earth by “greater works” through asking in Jesus’ name.

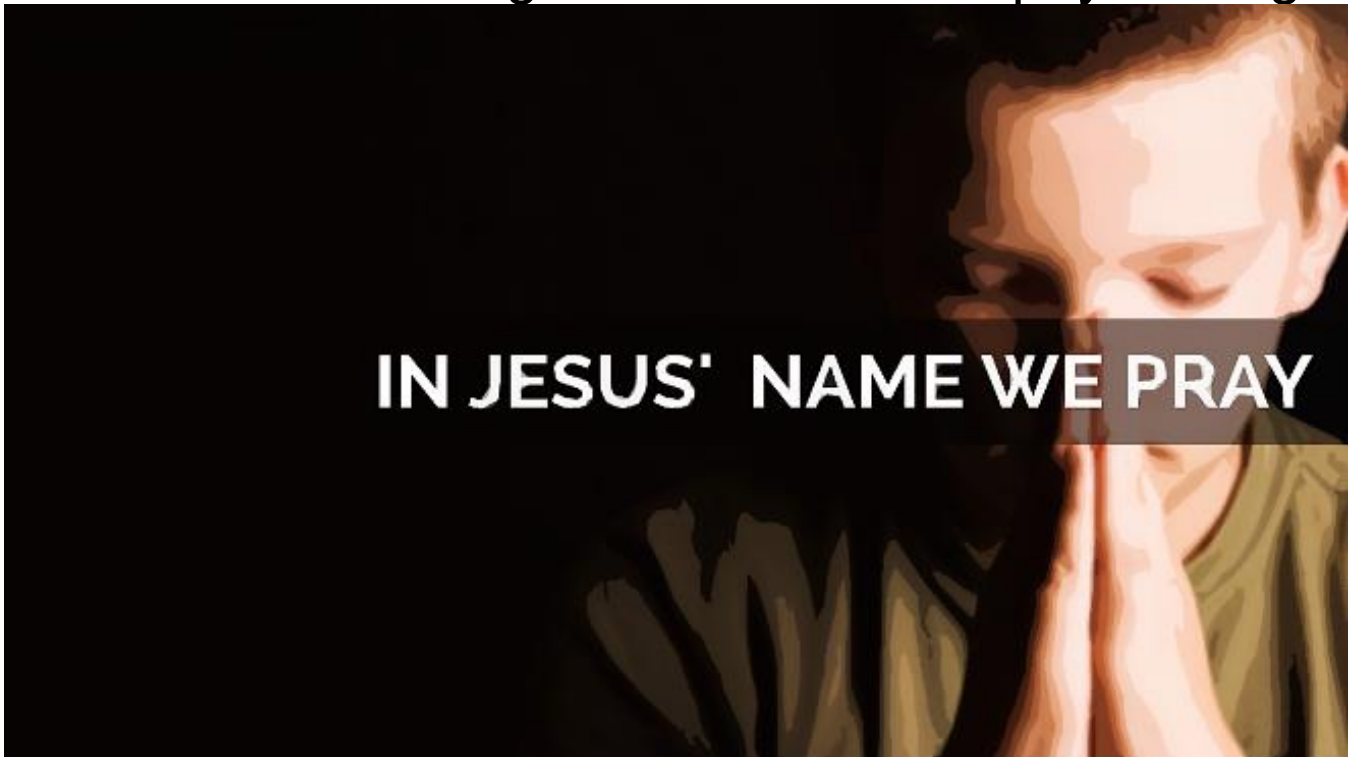


...the church, which is His Body,
the fullness of the One
who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:22-23

The Will of God done on earth is precisely the same as the works of God done through physical Jesus and those works, since He was going away, would be far greater in scale through His new global Body of Believers, His church, the millions upon millions of true disciples obediently allowing God to minister through them as He Himself did.

That's what the statement, "the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do," means. Alêtheia, as a whole, can do far greater works than the pastor as a lone person can do. We as the global church, the Body of Christ on earth, can be used by the Father to do far greater works than the Father could ever do through Jesus as a lone physical figure.



Ask anything in the name of Jesus and He will do it, or another way to say it; ask everything in the name of Jesus and it will be granted exactly as you ask. Of course, the corrective comes as both the means and the purpose of such prayer. The means is to pray in "Jesus' name," and the purpose is to "glorify the Father in Jesus."

Contrary to popular opinion and practice, to pray in Jesus' name is not now, nor has it ever been, nor will it ever be, a formula that was supposed to be tacked onto the end of every prayer as a way to get our will done in Heaven.

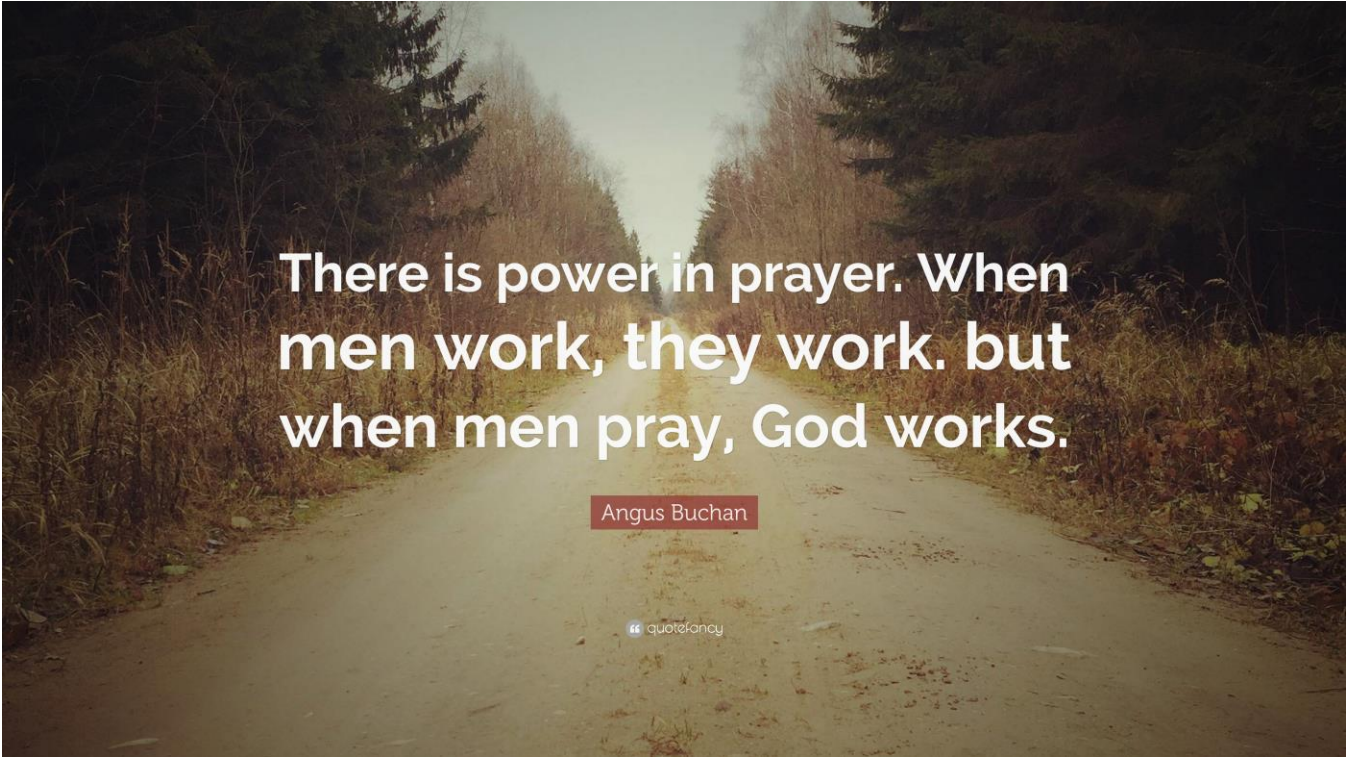
I often end a public prayer with a simple Amen, or some derived form of the common ending and I have actually had people call me out for failing to pin the precisely worded formula, "in Jesus' name," onto the end.

Many people think that your chances of getting what you want goes up exponentially by attaching that proper incantation at the end of prayers. You heard me right; the words "in Jesus' name," function exactly like a witch's incantation, when used as a means to get God to move on your behalf - to get God to work for you in the way that you believe He should.



This is a shocking picture in a church, but seriously, what's the difference between a person using witchcraft to manipulate things more to their liking and a person using prayer to do the same? The very definition of witchcraft is the attempt of getting supernatural forces to accomplish your will.

To do that with Almighty God is not only witchcraft it is outrageous arrogance. To think that we mere mortals with our incredibly skewed knowledge of the past, our unbelievably limited knowledge of the present, and our entirely nonexistent knowledge of the future, would command God to do as we deem appropriate is outlandishly arrogant and therefore contemptuously blasphemous.



There is power in prayer. When
men work, they work. but
when men pray, God works.

Angus Buchan

quote fancy

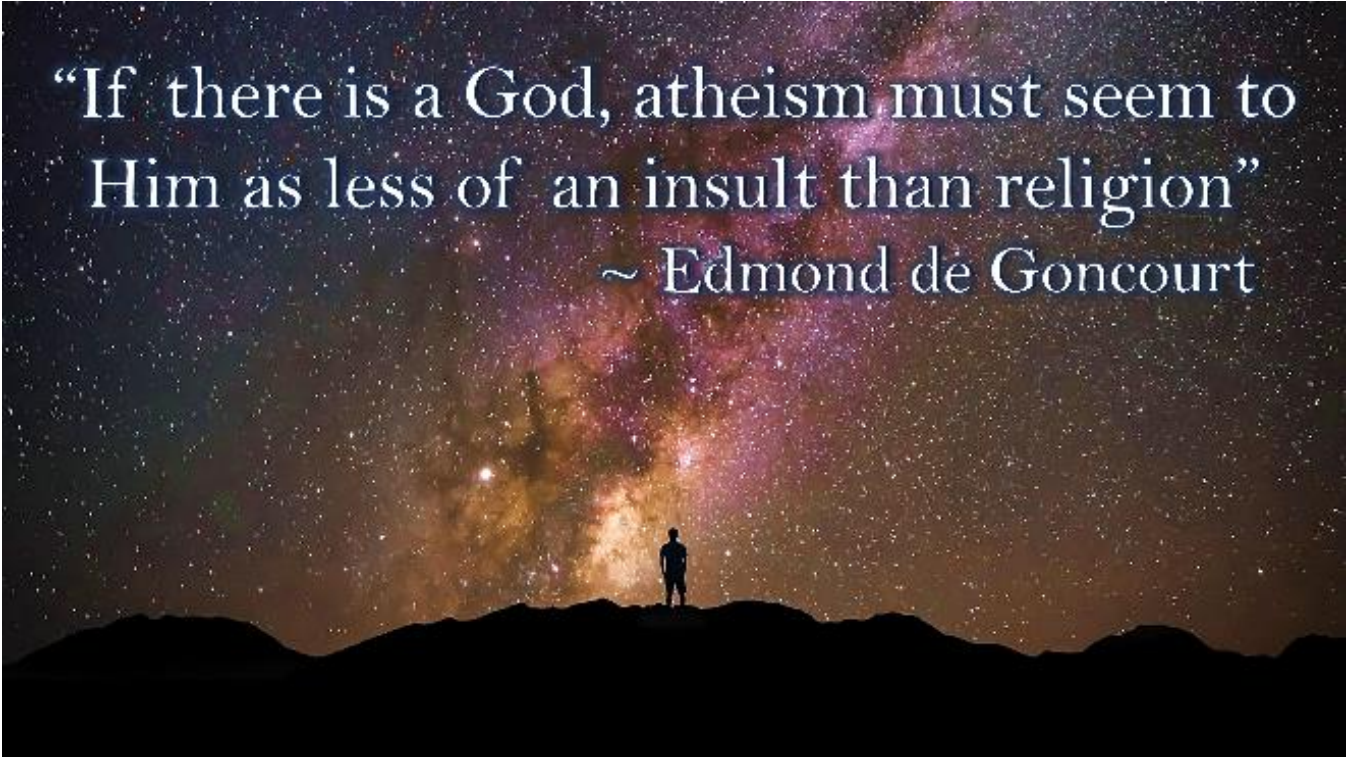
This statement seems okay at first glance, but the idea is actually in order to get God to work, men must pray. More to the point, in order to get God to work the way we want Him to work, in order to get God to give us what we want, in order to get God to make things conform to our idea of good... we need to ask Him in prayer.

The implication is that if we do that with enough faith and with the correct wording He will be forced to comply.



Treating God like He's some 1) doddering old fool Who is unaware of world problems until we bring them to His attention. Or that He's a 2) lazy curmudgeon Who's unwilling to do what is right unless we pester Him enough. Or that He's 3) so out of touch with our reality that He's incapable of figuring out what action to take until we inform Him of the correct course of action. Or that He's a 4) stern taskmaster Who will withhold good until we demonstrate enough personal faith through our prayers.

The utter folly of such thinking is evident in so many ways beyond the idea that God won't do good, unless we ask Him to do good, in the correct way, with the right posture, and with the proper formula.



“If there is a God, atheism must seem to Him as less of an insult than religion”
~ Edmond de Goncourt

I'll talk a bit about religion to make a point about prayer. The thing that you will discover if you spend far too much time studying the religions of the world is that there exists a common thread woven through all of them. That common thread is actually the entire focus of those religions and because that's true all the religions of the world are essentially the same.

Of course, there's the variations of all the window dressing, but the core and the goal of all religion is the identical. What you find is that all religion exists to serve man.

They are all self-serving, human aggrandizing, man as the focal point, designed systems. Every religion

known to mankind is ultimately about human beings gaining some advantage. Whether it is a better, more productive, more prosperous, more fertile, more blessed life now, or in the future, or both.

It is always about something the human does that propitiates some power, which basically means to appease the force or forces that are able to help. When you know what to look for, the self-centered nature of religion, becomes very apparent.

We can even see it in the selflessness of Buddhism. I'm not talking about westernized Buddhism practiced by Americans, because that's not real Buddhism and so, it's very easy to spot man in the middle of that, but even in the true Zen Buddhism of the East, it is the same. It teaches utter selflessness to the point of complete detachment from the body, from the emotions, and so, from fear. At first blush, that teaching doesn't seem to serve man, but the entire goal of that perfect selflessness is to selfishly end your own suffering.

If you reach total selflessness, you no longer have to continue in the cycle of physical suffering, but instead

become one with the force, to use Jedi Star Wars terminology.

The goal is reaching Nirvana, or total consciousness to use Carl Spackler's terminology - "Big hitter, the Lama." It means that you as an individual cease to exist because you are incorporated into and so are individually indistinguishable from the universal ooze. It is selflessness for the purpose of selfishly ending your personal pain. Man in the middle.

Even in the religions of science, secularism, humanism, and individualism the entire point is to gain a sense of control over the chaos.

The Judaism practiced by the people opposing Jesus was entirely self-centered. If they did the minimum religious stuff that they believed God commanded and scrupulously followed the legalistic rules and regulations that they derived from that, then God would be on their side.

It is exactly the same with the majority of what passes for Christianity. It's not just the obvious Prosperity Gospel witchcraft, it is far more nuanced than that. We all hope to get our will done in Heaven at times,

especially when the situation is dire. Who isn't praying fervently for God to save a dying child?

Beyond that, how many Christians are Christians, in order to benefit themselves? We even evangelize that way, don't we? We tell people that if they pray the "sinner's prayer" they will be saved from eternal torment. We tell people if they just accept Jesus, they'll have a better life now. They'll be more centered, they'll have greater hope, they'll have a church full of friends, they'll have access to God, they'll be blessed.

The hallmark of man-made religion, whether it is the atheistic science of Charles Darwin, or the secular humanism of Paul Kurtz, or the legalistic Judaism of Joseph ben Caiaphas, or the pseudo-Christianity of Joel Osteen, is a religious system of belief that serves man. In other words, all false religions benefit humans in some way. That makes total sense because a religion manufactured by humans will necessarily serve humans.

There is only one religion or belief system that is truly different, in fact, the very opposite of that self-serving, "man in the middle," human crafted fiction and that is Biblical Christianity.

When we understand the Truth that the Word of God proclaims we realize that it's not about us, it's entirely about God. True Biblical Christianity is never about gaining access to a genie in a bottle who will grant wishes and it's not about avoiding "H, E, double toothpicks" either.

It's about a glorious eternal Creator Who desires a genuine unity with His creatures and has facilitated such a relationship possibility by shedding His Own blood. That right-relationship between Creator and creature is analogous to a right-relationship between Father and child. There exists within it a dynamic range of relational associations from the Mentor-student to the Master-slave, and from the Savior-saved to the Friend-friend, and from the Creator-created to the Cause-effect.

This multi-layered and deeply complex relationship begins now and lasts for eternity and that is the deal with a religion that is clearly not man-made.

God and His Will are at the center. It is for man to conform to Him and His Will. For that we need help. Now, the reason I brought all of that up was to simply

show that when we approach prayer with the idea that we will influence a different outcome than what God was going to do all along, we have fallen into the same human-centered thinking that all manmade religions share.

We pray in the name of Jesus meaning that our prayer is in line with what Jesus would pray, which is identical to praying that God's "Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," God's "Will be done in my life as it His will is done in His presence."

As we have seen before, Heaven is not a place, it is a relationship. Specifically, a relational unity of persons existing in the full presence of God. We experience Heaven now to the extent that we are unified with God and His Will. What does that mean exactly? Unification with God is not God changing to accommodate you or me, but us changing to accommodate Him because He is already perfect in every way.

Would we require an unchanging and unchangeable perfect God to change into something less in order to accommodate our preferences? He already "emptied Himself" by being "born in the likeness of men" to "die on a Cross" as a servant on our behalf.

He is “exalted to the Right Hand” and now we would try to drag Him down to be our servant again, as though we own the bottle in which He’s trapped? As though we could conjure Him on a whim and bid Him do our will?



Heaven is where God’s Will is not just completely unopposed, but actually recognized as perfectly good, and so, harmoniously endorsed, and so, enthusiastically supported.

Beyond that, the Will of God is not something that He must decide. His Will is unchanged from before He spoke light into existence. Nothing surprises God. He’s not looking down from His lofty throne and scratching His head. He’s not calling Michael and Gabriel over

and asking them why we zoom past each other, weaving in and out of traffic, only to end up together again at the same red light. He's not looking at the news cycle and saying "well, I sure never saw that coming." His Will is His Will. He is sovereign, He absolutely cares, He knows precisely what He's doing, and He accomplishes exactly what He Wills.

Our prayers are to get us to accept His Will, which is to get us a little closer to Heaven. It's about our conformity to Him. When you pray with that attitude then every prayer is answered by Almighty God with a resounding yes! Yes, I will accomplish My Will on earth just as it stands already in Heaven.

That presents us with a simple yes or no question. Will you trust God, or not? Will you trust that what He has already decided is the good thing, or will you trust that you have a better idea?

As I said last week it's generally okay to plead for things, to make your requests known, to pour out your heart to God. God certainly understands. The subtle, and perhaps not so subtle difference is when you plead, and ask, and pour out your heart, do it with the intention of allowing God to mold you into a person

who can accept His answer. Someone who can endure, persevere, and stand as He comforts you to Him by strengthening your trust in Him.

That is to pray in Jesus' name. That's the real reason we attach that formula to the end of our prayers. It reminds us of who we are in comparison to Who He is, and it asks that the prayer that we just prayed is understood as valid only so far as it is God's Will. By this ending, we are making certain that our attitude is right. It is, in that case, as I said, the same thing as saying, "Yet not my will, but yours be done." (Matthew 26:39).

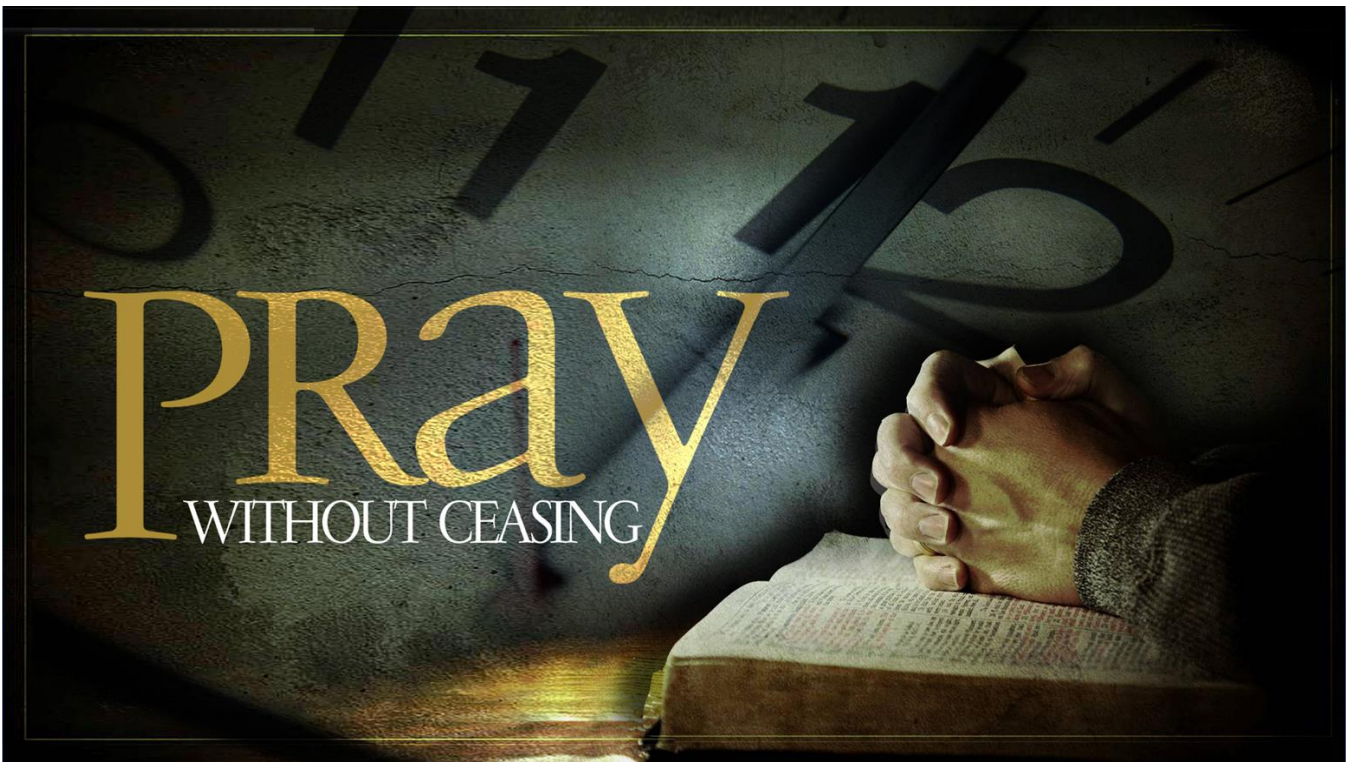


Then we finish it off with Amen. Amen in Greek is ἀμήν (ä-mān), and it was brought over from Hebrew אָמֵן (ä-

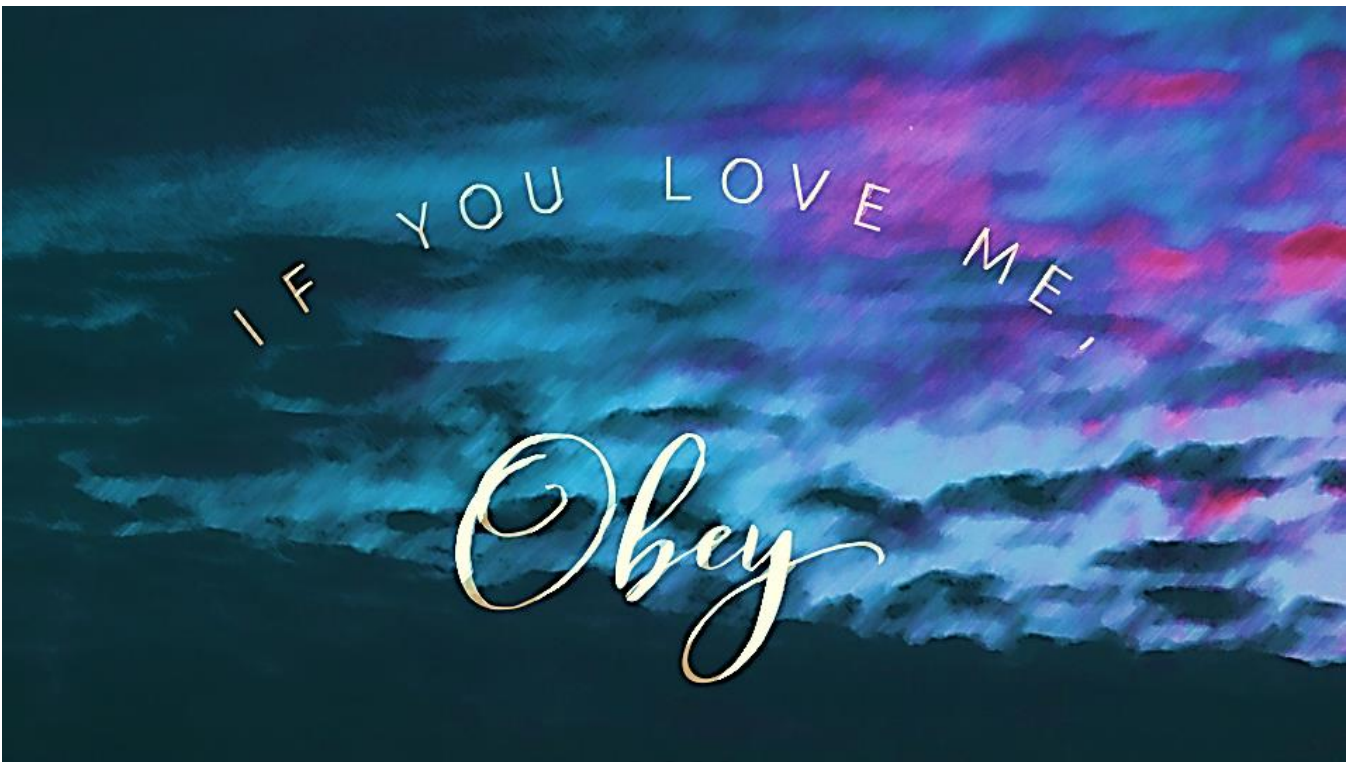
mān). It means truly, but the nuance is that because it is True, it is binding. It occurs often in the Old Testament and especially at the end of doxologies like Psalm 41 which closes with “Amen and amen.” Hebrew, אָמֵן אָמֵן (ä-měñ vĕ ä-měñ). Jesus used that as an opening to many of His statements where He would say, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (ä-mān ä-mān lĕ-gō hū-mēn), usually translated as “Truly, truly, I say to you.” Or the more stylish King James rendering, “Verily, verily, I say unto ye.” It means what I’m about to say is trustworthy and true and therefore it is binding as Truth.

Our whole ending formula actually means that what I’ve, or we’ve, just prayed, let it, and my own, or our, attitude, be in conformity to what God Wills and let that be true and binding upon me, or us.

Contrary to the idea that floats around Christianity this is not intended to mean that you cannot say amen to a prayer that you personally disagree with, this is to say that whatever was prayed, now be brought into conformity with God’s Will. In other words, we pray for the wrong things all the time, now with our closing we’re acknowledging that possibility and asking that our words and intentions be aligned with God’s Will.



I said before that prayer is the single-most important practice in the life of a Christian and I did not overstate that. Prayer is where God comforts us by conforming us... As the Apostle Paul taught, “Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17).



John 14:15, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

Last week we closed with this verse and now, hopefully, you can easily see its purpose in this place. True Biblical Christianity is all about conformity to God and it starts by obeying Jesus... What are His commandments? Of course, “Love one another.”

That single terse statement covers everything. We can break it into parts like saying that in order to Love one another we must first be filled with Love from God and that happens only when we Believe in Jesus. We can extrapolate that out to say that fully Believing in Jesus is the greatest love shown for God. We can go at it

from another angle and say that only when we truly Love one another can we effectively evangelize the lost.

By commanding us to Love one another Jesus was essentially repeating the Sermon on the Mount in one terse two-word statement. The basic meaning is that it's not about you or me, it's about Jesus and His ministry to the world which includes us. Each one of us is His because He ministered to us through earlier Christians and now as His people, we are to empty ourselves as He once did, and as our predecessor Christians did, and we are to pick up and carry our cross of sacrificial service to others so that He will be exalted all the more and that's Love.

We do it because we love Him, and we love Him because He first loved us and poured His love out into us. This Agapê Love is always tangible, always real enough to produce physical fruit. In this case, physical obedience to physically serve. What we get out of the deal is far greater than anything conceivable by man-made religion, but it is never our goal, it is only the side effect of being in right-relationship with the "King of kings and the Lord of lords," through His love for us because of His love and obedience to the Father.

This present pericope begins with our love and obedience to Jesus in verse 15, and it ends in verse 31 with Jesus stating “so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.” That’s Biblical Christianity.

Once again though, how can a naturally self-centered human being love Jesus enough to obey His commandment to love others?



The Other Paraclete

John 14:16–26, 16“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; 17the Helper is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or

know Him; but you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.

Jumping down to verse 21...

21The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.”

Now jumping down to verse 23b...

23b“If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him. 24The one who does not love Me does not follow My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

Finally jumping down to verse 26...

26The Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you.

Fear not, we will cover all the intervening verses, but for today I wanted to restrict our conversation to the Helper and His purpose.

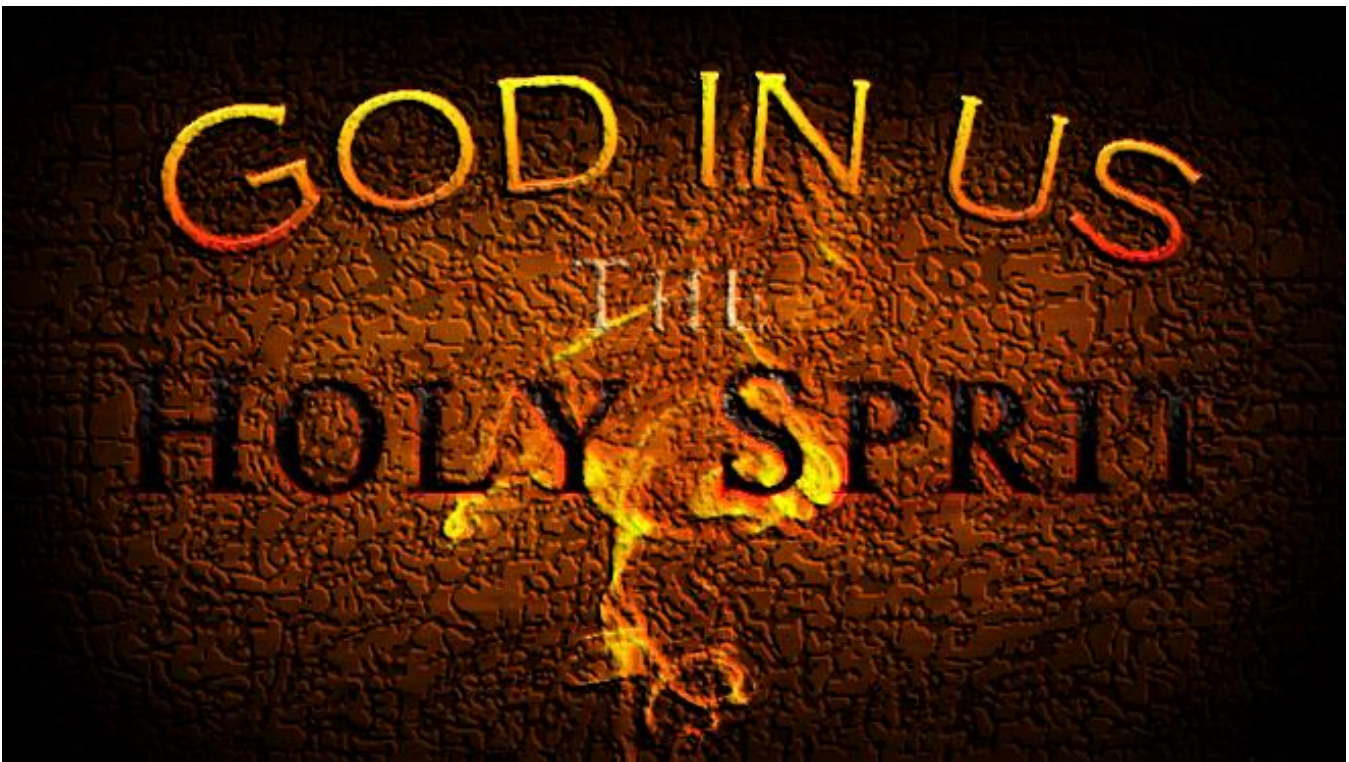
The Helper in this translation is the Counselor, or the Comforter, or the Friend, or the Advocate, in other translations. There are certainly elements of all of those things in the underlying Greek word παράκλητος (pä-řä-klā-tōs), but there's so much more, like the Teacher, or the Defender, or the Intercessor, or the Mediator. The role is so complex it is probably best to stay with the derived religious word Paraclete to incorporate all of His roles within a human person.

The basic idea is someone who is called alongside another for the purpose of assisting them. The Greek technical use described what we call a defense attorney. I don't know how many of you have had your legal rights read to you for real, but I can tell you that it is a sobering experience.



When you're in that situation your best friend on earth is your defense attorney. He or she will represent you, comfort you, teach you, encourage you, counsel you, advocate for you, and of course, defend you. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead and He is the One Who enables you to become a Christian and then enables you to be a Christian.

He does it as the "Spirit of Truth" which always points you to "the Way and the Truth and the Life." He is called the other Paraclete because Jesus was and is the first Paraclete. He is Truth, He is your Advocate, He is with the Father and He will return, but until He does, we have been given the other Paraclete to dwell within us and guide us.



The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ and in verse 23 we see that for those who obey Jesus' commandments, both He and the Father, dwell or abide in that person as well. Just as knowing Jesus is to know the Father and the Holy Spirit, so to have the Holy Spirit indwell you is to have God indwell you.

If that is not sufficient help in living the transformed life, I guess I don't know what is...

Obedience is first of all to believe in Jesus and second of all to love your fellow Christians in tangible acts of service. The Holy Spirit enables both. Lean into that reality instead of leaning into your own understanding

and strength. Obey Jesus by following the leading of the Holy Spirit.