



THE TEACHING ABOUT
CREATION

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GROUNDED 1

Talks 8-10 of Eaton's Whole Counsel of God series by Terran Williams

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THE TEACHING ABOUT CREATION, PART 1

CREATION

TALK 8 (THIS PART ABOUT CREATION STARTS AT 29:45)

Contents:

- Creation: a neglected doctrine
- The fact of creation

The first thing God ever did that concerns us is this: he created the heavens and the earth.

How does God relate to time? Answer: The Bible does not answer the question at all. The Bible doesn't deal with this philosophical question. It doesn't even distinguish between time and eternity. Eternity, it seems, is merely time going on forever and ever. Eternity is not the end of time - Revelations 8 speaks of 30 minutes silence in heaven, for example.

CREATION: A NEGLECTED DOCTRINE

Generally, the teaching about creation is a neglected doctrine. One major reason for the neglect of the doctrine of creation is the existence of Platonism in the early church. Plato, the Greek teacher, had a sharp distinction between matter and spirit. The early church, because of the unhelpful influence of Greek philosophy, tended to minimize, or even be hostile against, matter, and body, and anything material, including all physical creation. (This is where the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary came about - because they were hostile against things material - they could not tolerate the thought that Mary had sex.) They wrongly believed that to be spiritual was to be anti-physical, as though spirit and matter were opposed to each other.

But think of how Jesus was never anti-creation. He was totally unlike Plato. Think of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) where he speaks of things like salt, light, pens, brothers, pennies, courts, prisons, fire, eyes, hands, knives, legal documents, thrones, footstools, hair, teeth, tunics, sun, rain, trumpets, religious buildings, doors, rooms, perfume, faces, moth, rust, thieves, treasure, masters, money, food, drink, clothing, birds, flowers, fields, specks, planks, dogs, pigs, pearls, fathers, gifts, bread, stones, fish, snakes, gates, roads, sheep, wolves, grapes, figs, trees, houses, sand, rock, storms, rains, winds, floods and more. Jesus was full of creation. Unlike Jesus, we tend to speak abstract ideas. We love to theorize. But Jesus was out in the creation. He 'earthed' his life and his teaching in the realities of the physical world.

Another major reason for the neglect of the doctrine of creation is the current Bible-science controversy. People often tend to put Science and the Bible against each other. For example, six-day creation, evolution etc. Most theological books, under the heading of creation, just speak about the controversies, but don't focus much on the Bible's teaching about creation. They don't, for example, focus on the earthy, practical wisdom that the Bible provides. Solomon, called the wisest man of his

time, loved learning and teaching about the wonders of God's creation. This was even called 'wisdom'.

1 Kings 4:33

Solomon spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.

We tend to define 'wisdom' as 'knowledge of the Bible and theology'. But in fact 'wisdom' is very practical and earthy. Wisdom is the practical skill for living in this physical world. The correct diagnosis of sickness, for example, is a matter of wisdom. The book of Proverbs is full of 'tips' for making life work better.

THE FACT OF CREATION

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

At one point only God existed.

This single verse excludes atheism. It excludes the idea that matter is eternal. It excludes polytheism (belief in many gods). It excludes fate (belief in some impersonal control out there). It excludes pantheism (the belief that God is nature).

The rest of the Bible will show us how salvation is the restoration of creation.

THE TEACHING ABOUT CREATION, PART 2

THE FACT OF CREATION CONT./CREATION ORDINANCES

TALK 9

Contents:

- Fact of creation, cont'd
- Creation ordinances (47:20)

B. THE FACT OF CREATION, CONT.

Genesis 1:2

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep...

Once created, the earth was still not ready to be inhabited by humans. God needed to shape the unshaped earth. God designed the world for the human race.

Genesis 2b-3

The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

God created by the Spirit and the word. As the Bible goes forward, more clarity is brought to the concept of 'the word' – it refers to Jesus Christ. John, the apostle, later makes this point:

John 1:1-2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made ...

God creates by the Spirit and the Word (Jesus). The whole Trinity is involved. Paul, the apostle, makes the same point as John:

Colossians 1:15-17

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (which means 'owner') over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The Bible continues the theme of how God created everything through the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 33:6

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath (i.e. Spirit) of his mouth.

Just as the Father initiates salvation, so the Father initiates creation. Just as Jesus mediates salvation, so he mediates creation. Just as the Spirit executes salvation, so the Spirit executes creation.

WHAT ABOUT THE DAYS OF CREATION?

Are they literal days, as the Bible-science controversialists put it? There are five opinions on the subject:

1) The literalist view. This view says the world and life was created about 10000 years ago, in a matter of six days. People with this view tend to get into science, because they argue the Bible is, amongst other things, a science book. But is it wise to get science from the Bible? We must not forget about Galileo. The church once believed the sun revolved around the earth because of some verses in the Bible. They arrested Galileo who claimed that scientific evidence pointed toward the earth revolving around the sun. But the church was wrong. We are surely not meant to get science out of the Bible, especially from this child-like poetry of Genesis 1. Genesis 1 is picture language, not science.

2) The revelation view. According to this view, the six days are each a day of God's revelation to Moses about origins. So on one day, God revealed to Moses some of how he created the world. Then the next day, day two, he revealed some more. But there is no hint of this in the text.

3) The non-literal 'day' view. Each of the six 'days' is in fact a lengthy period of time, not a 24-hour period. Some say it is undefined. Others believe that these are six geological periods.

4) The gap-between-day view. This view says that on one particular 'day' God created the animals. And then, perhaps after thousands of years, on yet another 'day' God created the humans.

5) The picture language view. This is Eaton's view. It is an extended anthropomorphism – the Bible using the picture of a workman to talk about God. It is parabolic history: although it speaks of some real historical things God did, it is cased in picture language, and should not be read in an overly literal way. The text itself, not science, shows clearly that this is picture language, and therefore should not be read in an overly literal way:

- The sun was not made till the fourth day. How could 'days' have existed before the sun?
- The seventh day is not a 24-hour period because we are still in it, as Hebrews 4:1-6 reminds us.
- The sixth day is clearly not a 24-hour period. Genesis 2 retells us what happened on the sixth day – and it clearly takes longer than 24 hours. Genesis 2 speaks of the long processes with which God created life.

If the fifth view is true, then there is no reason for a conflict between the Bible and scientific discoveries. According to this view, the Bible does not give us much scientific detail at all.

WHAT ABOUT NOAH'S FLOOD?

Was it a universal flood? Did all the animal species in the whole world get into the boat? Eaton argues that the history of a real flood is being told in a parabolic form.

Did all the water cover all the mountains in the world? We must remember that this refers to 'the known world'. When it says, in Genesis 6, that the world was drowned, it refers to the Mesopotamian 'world', not the entire planet. This means that God took a sample of animals into boat – this makes the point that the wellbeing of creation (animals) is tied up with humans.

Did the whole world's population descend from Noah? But it's impossible: for example, the Aborigines and the Red Indians, who were already in existence 20000 years ago, pre-existed Noah. Why is it that we feel we can agree with the dating of historians only up until a certain date, but then when it clashes with an overly literal reading of Genesis 1-11 we feel we can disagree?

HOW LONG AGO DID ADAM AND EVE EXIST?

All the modern evidence points to the fact that the human race as we know it goes back to at least 50000 BC.

The first couple of Genesis 1-3 are not necessarily the direct parents of Cain and Abel, mentioned in Genesis 4. By Genesis 4 there was already a great population of people. Between the first couple and Genesis 4, thousands of years have marched by.

The main point is this: we need to take the teaching of Genesis 1-11 as it comes – it does not present itself as a science book. We should not try to draw scientific insights out of it. It is, after all, picture language, not a science book.

WHAT ABOUT EVOLUTION?

My own answer is 'no, I don't believe in evolution', but not because of some verse in the Bible (after all, the Bible does not go into detail on how 'Adam was made from the dust'), but because the evidence seems lacking. But is it possible to believe in evolution and in the Bible at the same time? The answer is yes. We should not worry too much whether evolution is true or not. We shouldn't be too caught up in Bible-science controversies.

WHAT ABOUT THE SEVENTH DAY?

Genesis 2: 1-2

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

These verses don't speak about us keeping the Sabbath. Rather they give us insight into how God works. The key question to ask is 'Why did God create man last?' The answer is so that we can't claim to have helped him. We made no contribution to the existence of creation. We came along just when God is enjoying his day. We're meant to be enjoying all that God has done along with God as he enjoys it. In short, we're invited to follow God by faith into his own Sabbath-rest.

Hebrews 4:1-11 develops this theme on entering into God's own rest. (The following points have been rephrased for clarity sake.)

For the Israelites, the Promised Land is the 'rest' God invited them to. The Israelites entered into the 'rest' (i.e. the Promised Land) God had for them. They were to simply trust and follow God as he gave them the Promised Land.

For all people, salvation is the 'rest' God invites us to. We 'enter God's rest' when we trust in Christ for our salvation. Christ accomplished salvation. We simply trust in Christ and begin to enjoy this salvation. God does it all. We enjoy it.

For Christians who are already saved, there is yet another kind of rest. It is the rest of actually experiencing all that God wants to give us. Once we are saved, if we follow God with persistent faith he will lead us into the inheritance or reward he has for us. This includes the experience of rest (Matthew 11:28-29). God does it all (though we do participate). We enjoy it.

For Christians, heaven is part of the rest God has for us. We will finally enjoy God's own rest in heaven one day. God does it all. We get to enjoy it.

CREATION ORDINANCES

God created the world with certain structures built in. These are creation ordinances. God ordains things for humanity in creation, by virtue of creation.

There are five of them:

- 1) Humanity is given dominion in creation.
- 2) Humanity is given work in creation.
- 3) Humanity is given marriage in creation. Marriage is a creation ordinance, not a church ordinance (such as baptism). People are truly married whether they are saved or not.
- 4) Humanity is given language in creation. The moment man is created God speaks to him.
- 5) Humanity is given fellowship with God in creation. Augustine prayed rightly, 'You have made us for yourself. And our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.'

Despite popular belief, 'nationhood' (only introduced after the flood) as well as Sabbath-keeping (only introduced by Moses under the now-obsolete Old Covenant) are not creation ordinances. Literal Sabbath-keeping is no longer necessary under the New Covenant.

We need to understand the structures God built into creation. We are in danger if we go cross-grain against the way God has made us.

THE TEACHING ABOUT CREATION, PART 3

CREATION ORDINANCES CONT./ THE CHARACTER / FALLENNESS / REDEMPTION / SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION / GOD'S RULE IN CREATION / MIRACLES

TALK 10

Contents:

- Introduction
- Creation ordinances, cont'd
- The character of creation
- The significance of creation

We're meant to live naturally (in harmony with natural laws) and supernaturally (in dependence on God's special grace) at the same time.

Interestingly, the field of science emerged when people did not superstitiously worship creation. It was only when people separated God from creation (as the Christians and the Muslims did) that science could begin to thrive.

C. CREATION ORDINANCES, CONTINUED

In the previous talk, creation ordinances were touched on, but let me repeat some of them, and include some more detail:

- 1) God gave us dominion over creation. This does not mean to exploit. It means to 'shepherd' creation. In Hebrew and Greek, the words 'shepherd' and 'rule' are used interchangeably.
- 2) God gave us work in creation. Work was part of paradise. You might say, 'work doesn't feel paradise-like'. The reason is that when Adam fell, creation was also affected. 'Cursed be the ground' (Genesis 3:17). Work became a drudgery.
- 3) God gave us marriage in creation. In Genesis 2 there is teaching on God's plan for marriage. In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus based his own teaching about marriage on the Genesis 2 verses.

Genesis 2:18, 20--25

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. ²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Notice a few things about God's plan for marriage from these verses:

- It is normal (v18). To forbid marriage is called 'a doctrine of demons' (see 1Timothy 4:1-3).
- It is between a man and a woman.
- It is a gift of grace. Adam sleeps while God provides a wife for him (v21).
- It is reason for joy. Verse 23 should be translated, 'The man said, "At last, this is now bone of my bones ..." He is full of joy.
- It is life-long. There is no second Eve for Adam.
- It is sexual (v24). The sex is not just to produce children. It is to celebrate the marriage. It is for this reason that contraception is acceptable.
- It is monogamous. There is just one woman for Adam.
- It is public. God let's everybody know about it.
- It doesn't depend on the birth of children. There is no mention of children. In Africa, many people wrongly believe a marriage is not a marriage until children come along.
- It is not a church ordinance, but a creation ordinance. For this reason, you don't need to first be saved before you can marry. Baptism is a church ordinance, but marriage is not. That's why marriages don't need to happen in a church context.

THE CHARACTER OF CREATION

Creation can be so beautiful. Sunsets. Mountain views. Eclipses. Sea edge. 'The heavens declare the glory of God' (Psalm 19:1).

Creation can be so ugly. Tsunamis. Earthquakes. Predators killing a buck.

Why this paradox? The answer is that creation has fallen (Genesis 3:17-18). Nature is cursed. Creation was made for us. Its state and destiny is tied up with us. When we were good, it was good. When we fell, it fell.

Amazingly, Jesus died for all of creation, not just for us.

Colossians 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

When we fell (though still reflecting some of God's image), creation fell (though still reflecting some of God's glory). When Christ redeemed us, he also redeemed creation. When we are finally glorified, creation will also be finally glorified. See Romans 8:19-22 for more on this theme.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION

1) Creation is the basis of science. The basis of science is because creation is as it is. Creation is something separate from its Creator. God made creation based on laws that can be discovered.

2) Creation is the basis of wisdom. Wisdom has a lot to do with knowing how our world works. The Bible often illustrates things from creation. For example, look at Proverbs – it refers to animals and insects:

Proverbs 6:5-8

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Or listen to Jesus drawing wisdom out of his study of creation:

Matthew 6:26-30

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Matthew 5:44-45

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

GOD'S RULE IN CREATION

(this section includes both the doctrine of God's providence and the doctrine of miracles)

Because God is the Lord of creation, he controls everything. He is the Lord of the world, nations, and our personal circumstances. We are meant to live on the sovereignty of God. When things happen in a nation, we can assume God is doing something.

He is the Lord of history and of nature. He knows how many hairs are on our head. He is in control of everything, including the circumstances of our lives. Let us explore the story of Joseph to see how this is so.

Think of how Joseph lived on God being in control. He was unjustly sold into slavery. He had temporary success in Potiphar's household, but was unjustly sent to prison. Then, by God's intervention, he became Prime Minister of Egypt. In Genesis 45 he declares that he had learnt to trust God's sovereign control of his circumstances. If you really believe in creation, then you will believe in God's ongoing rule over creation.

Sometimes things in the short term work together from bad, but ultimately, in the long term, God works all things together for good. In Joseph's case, the fact that he became Prime Minister led to him being able to preserve the lives of Abraham's descendants for a season.

Genesis 45:5-7

Joseph said to his brothers, 'And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.'

God has intimate control over every detail of our lives. This is called God's providence.

The greatest example of how God uses evil of people to accomplish good is the cross. Listen to what Peter says to some people who contributed to Christ's crucifixion:

Acts 2:23-24

This man, Jesus, was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death.

Just when the men thought they were getting their will done, God was actually getting his will done. They were trying to resist Christ's reign, and yet God used their sin to accomplish his victory over sin on the cross.

God has mysterious ways of getting his will done. Things may be looking really terrible, but God has a plan. For example, the influx of Muslims into the West just may be God's plan. Instead of us going to them to reach them, they're coming to us.

Jesus is the head over all things for his church (Ephesians 1:22). He is sovereign over what is happening in the nations, and he will work it to the church's advantage.

1) Trusting in God's sovereignty leads to forgiveness. Joseph understands that God, not people, sent him. We see that when we believe in God's sovereignty it is much easier to forgive people. Joseph even protects the very people who betrayed him. 'Yes, you shouldn't have done it to me, but God allowed it to happen, and God has a plan to turn it for my good.' God is the Lord of creation. Nothing happens without his control.

2) Trusting in God's sovereignty is one aspect of understanding why miracles don't always happen. In the Joseph story, there is an absence of miracles (time 35:35). Still today, sometimes when God is acting naturally, he is not acting supernaturally. Interestingly, church theology and culture have in the last decades tended to shift from a disbelief in miracles to a belief in miracles. (This is seen in the Famous Five [evidencing secularism in the fifties and sixties] in comparison with Harry Potter [evidencing the supernaturalism and superstition in the 21st century].) The Christian church seems to be really hungry for miracles at the moment.

What does the Bible teach about miracles?

It teaches us that God sometimes acts through the natural, and sometimes he acts through the supernatural. God didn't give Joseph the miracles he wanted. And sometimes he doesn't give us the miracles we want. Yet God is at work. God is sovereign even when there is not a miracle. Think of the book of Acts: in one situation Peter is released supernaturally from prison, but in another situation Paul is in prison and he is not rescued. He is in prison for two years. He gets shipwrecked on the

way. God sometimes gives us miracles, and sometimes he doesn't. God sometimes withholds the supernatural. Interestingly, Paul does a miracle once he is shipwrecked on the island. God decides when miracles happen. We are in danger of trying to take miracles that God is not giving. It is true that God answers 'the prayer of faith' (James 5:15), but even the prayer of faith is something God gives to us. Think of how Peter had never healed the beggar even though he walked past him so many times, and then one day he heals him. Why? Because on this particular occasion, God sovereignly gave him the gift of faith. Notice how Peter 'looked straight at him' – a reference to the gift of faith. Peter is filled with supernatural confidence, given by God.

Acts 3:3-7

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

But this doesn't happen all the time. Paul, whom God used many times to heal people, wrote, 'I left Trophimus sick in Miletus' (2 Timothy 4:20). God is sovereign.

3) Trusting in God's sovereignty helps us understand that our decision-making should not be overly dependent on God's direct revelations and supernatural guidance. Much of the Christian life is about learning to live within natural processes. We think, we plan, we go to the doctor. A study of the book of Acts shows that sometimes God speaks directly through dreams, visions and prophecies, but very often decisions are made through common sense, and natural wisdom. A study of the way Joseph makes decisions reveals the same thing: sometimes God leads Joseph through dreams and visions, but most times he is trying to figure out the next step with only natural wisdom – and yet God is still at work even in the natural processes of life.

When we are obsessed with the supernatural we tend to try to manipulate miracles and supernatural guidance, and we will be in trouble. We can't just switch them on. Miracles are exceptional. We can't expect a miracle a day. Miracles by definition don't happen too often. They amaze us, precisely because we don't see them every day. We must not live exclusively on miracles.

WHAT ARE MIRACLES?

1) Miracles are signs of Jesus' Messiah-ship. John the Baptizer wonders if Jesus really is the promised Messiah. In response, Jesus points to his miracles as the evidence.

Luke 7:20-22

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy[b] are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

2) Miracles are crowd-gatherers. Miracles gather crowds. But when the crowd comes, don't preach on miracles – rather preach the gospel. That is what Peter did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He didn't preach about the miracle of the supernatural experience of the Spirit; he preached about Jesus, sin and judgment.

3) Miracles are flashes of glory. They are a foretaste of the end of the world. Think about Lazarus' death. Martha believed that God could raise dead Lazarus on 'the last day', but Jesus says, 'I am the resurrection' meaning, 'I am the presence of the future'. Then he heals Lazarus, and so doing, provides a flash of future glory in the present.

John 11:24-26, 43-44

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ... When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus never told Martha to claim the miracle. He chose to provide a glimpse of the future glory.

4) Miracles are acted parables. They have spiritual lessons. They are pictures of who Jesus is, and the way he works in our lives. For example, after healing a blind man, he teaches 'I am the light of the world.' Another example (Mark 8:22-29) is the way he heals a blind man in two-stages. The man only gets partial sight at first, and then full sight. Yet at the exact same time, the disciples only have partial revelation that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus uses the miracle to throw light on their spiritual half-sightedness. Another example (Mark 2:1-11) is of Jesus declaring a man's sins forgiven. He heals the man as a parable of the forgiveness. The healing is instant. So is the forgiveness. The healing sets the man free. So does the forgiveness.

In the last fifty years we have moved from an under-belief in miracles to an over-belief in miracles. This is typical of the church: we swing from extreme to extreme. We need to find the middle road. We need to learn that God is in control even in the midst of the natural.

We must avoid a God-in-the-gaps theology, which only finds God in the things we cannot understand or explain. This theology wrongly believes that God is only at work supernaturally. The truth is that God is at work in everything. He also works naturally. God was involved in every step of the way in Joseph's life. We need to live on the sovereign will of God. When we have sickness, or are in trouble, we trust God. We can ask for miracles, but can't switch them on.

IN CONCLUSION

God is always involved in our lives. He is not only the God of salvation, but of all creation. Even before we became Christians he was involved. He is not just the God who is with us when we are in church. He is with us when we are in a dungeon, like Joseph was. He knows how many hairs are on our head. This is our Father's world. And he is in control of every detail.

What about prayer? How does prayer work? Answer: I don't know. What we do know is that when we cast ourselves upon God, things happen.

Jesus is the Lord of creation. He 'sustains all things by his powerful word' (Hebrews 1:3). We need to trust him. When everything is going wrong, yet everything is going right. God 'works together in all things together for the good of those who love him' (Romans 8:28). God works even in our mistakes and sins. This is the best news there ever was. The God of creation puts our bad deeds in his pot, and something good comes out of it. This does not justify our wrongdoing – we must take responsibility for our failures, but we can hand them over to God.

As said before, the cross is the best example of God's ability to turn a wicked situation around. Just when the devil thought he was triumphing over Jesus on the cross, God was really triumphing over the devil. He does the same in our lives – if we are saved that is (after all, Romans 8:28 is a promise to Christians, not to everyone).