

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Part 2

Scripture Reading

“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Introduction

This morning, we turn our attention once again to the wonderful instruction of our Lord Jesus as He teaches us how to pray.

Thus far, we have learned that our prayers should be purposed to exalt the glory of God and His preeminence in our lives. As children of the heavenly Father, before we petition God's throne with our needs (and we all have needs), we are to first celebrate our gracious adoption into God's Kingdom thru Christ. Furthermore, we are to exalt the holy name of God, fix our gaze upon His redemptive kingdom, as well as surrender to His sovereign will for our lives. When the foundation of our prayers is the exaltation of God's glory, we insure that our prayer life is God-centered, rather than man-centered.

And so, as we enter into the glorious and majestic presence of our heavenly Father thru prayer, it is His fatherhood, His holiness, His eternal kingdom, and His sovereign will that should capture our minds and hearts.

To be clear, Jesus teaches every Christian that prayer is above anything else the willing and joyful surrender to our heavenly Father, who promises us that His holiness, His eternal kingdom, and His sovereign will are what we all need the most – more so even than daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance.

Transition

Having said that, as Christians, we should be encouraged that Jesus recognizes our most essential needs as people living in a broken and sinful world. This should not surprise us in the least when we consider that our Lord Jesus, while remaining fully God, took on the form of human flesh. (Phil. 2:5-11)

Thru His incarnation, Jesus experienced rejection, as well as anger, disappointment, fatigue, loneliness, persecution, poverty, and homelessness. Our Lord knows firsthand the immense challenges we face as human beings. The truth is this! No matter where you are in life, Jesus can sympathize with you as one who has lived under the dark banner of sin and temptation and all its terrible consequences.

In fact, toward the end of the Bible, the author of Hebrews writes...

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
(Hebrews 4:14-16)

What encouraging news! Our Savior and Lord sympathizes with our weaknesses, temptations, and daily needs.

How so? Jesus Christ experienced firsthand the unique demands and challenges of living the human life.

Jesus knows what it means to be hungry and thirsty. Are you living day-by-day – paycheck-to-paycheck? Jesus knows what it’s like to live day-by-day. Was it not your Savior who proclaimed, *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”?* (Luke 9:58) Jesus knows what it means and feels like to live in complete dependence upon God the Father to meet His “daily” needs.

Jesus Christ knows what it means to be tempted at every turn and every way. There is no temptation you can experience in this life that Jesus cannot identify with. What temptation are you most susceptible to? Lust? Greed? Pride? Anger? Materialism? Jesus encountered these temptations, and many more, yet remained sinless. When you're tempted, Jesus Christ identifies and sympathizes with you.

Jesus Christ knows what it means to long for deliverance from evil. Do we not see Jesus crying out to God in the Garden of Gethsemane to deliver Him from the evil He was about to experience at Golgotha? After all, He was the very one who bore our evil sin on the cross.

Furthermore, Jesus knows what it means to desire mercy and freedom from suffering and pain. Yet, Jesus surrendered to God's sovereign will to crush Him on the Cross of Calvary so that He might become a sacrifice and propitiation of our sin and unrighteousness.

It is because Jesus knows these things – intimately knows these things – that He sympathizes with us and instructs us to pray specifically for our greatest needs.

Exegesis

In the second half of the Lord's Prayer, which is found in verses 11-13, Jesus teaches us how to petition our heavenly Father for our greatest needs in this life. Specifically, we should take careful note of the simplicity, yet all-encompassing nature of what Jesus commands us to ask for.

In particular, Jesus instructs us to petition God for three things – (1) our daily bread, (2) forgiveness of sin, and (3) deliverance from evil.

In a nutshell, our greatest earthly needs are summed up in these three things. Present in this list are our physical needs, mental needs, and spiritual needs. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones aptly notes, "*The body is remembered, the soul is remembered, and the spirit is remembered.*"

In regards to presenting our petitions before God, Martyn Lloyd-Jones paints a beautiful picture for us...

“This, surely, is the marvelous thing, that God likes us to come to Him. The God who is self-existent, the great Jehovah, the God who is not dependent upon anybody, who is from eternity to eternity, who exists in Himself apart from all – this is the astounding thing, that because we are His children He likes us to come to Him, and likes to hear us. The God who made heaven and earth, and orders the stars in their courses, likes to hear our lisping praises, likes to hear our petitions. That is because God is love; and that is why, though He knows all about our needs, it gives Him great pleasure, if we can so put it, when He sees us coming to Him to ask for our daily bread.”

Our Daily Bread

Jesus begins by instructing us to pray for our daily “bread.” Jesus says...

“Give us this day our daily bread...”

Naturally, when we hear the word “bread,” we gravitate to those needs associated with our health – food and water in particular. However, here, bread means so much more than mere sustenance.

To be clear, Jesus has in mind a petition that says – *“Father, give me this day what is necessary for me.”* All we are to ask for is what is sufficient for the upcoming day. This is a prayer that emphasizes the necessities of life, not the luxuries. This prayer isn’t about our 401k’s, iPhone’s, flat screen TV’s, or second homes. This is a prayer of petition that focuses solely on life’s most basic necessities – not wants. Such necessities extend beyond simply food. These necessities include food, shelter, clothing, work, and relationships.

In the day of Jesus, laborers were commonly paid each day for the work they had performed that day. Such pay was frequently despairingly low, so low in fact that it was impossible to save any of it. Everything the worker made was used to provide the basic staples of life that he and his family needed for that one-day.

How many times have we petitioned God not so much for our daily needs, but for luxuries and future wants?

D.A. Carson writes...

“Our very ingratitude is an insult to [God]; the present thankless generation is an affront to Him. We have taken his gifts for granted; and then when they begin to dry up we complain and call into question the very existence of this beneficent God. Life in this Western society is not quite as precarious as it was in the first century. We have received so much more. But sadly, our very wealth has contributed to our thanklessness, to our spiritual bankruptcy.”

When is the last time we celebrated the faithfulness of God in providing for our daily needs – food, water, shelter, clothing, and work. This seems so elementary to us in the West. Yet, for the majority of the world, which lives far more like the Jews of Jesus day, this prayer makes far more sense.

First of all, in this first petition, Jesus reminds us that God is interested and committed to meeting our needs – not supplying our luxurious wants. God is the faithful supplier of our most innate needs. This is His great promise and passion. At the same time, God is not a cosmic Santa Claus who promises to grant our every want.

Second, we are utterly dependent upon God to provide our needs. Somehow, we in the West have been tricked and deceived into believing that such provisions are achieved by us independent of God’s generosity and faithfulness. It is our ingenuity and hard work that provides life’s most basic staples (or so we think). Not so! The fact that our needs are met daily is a reminder that we are utterly dependent upon God, the Father of lights who gives good and perfect gifts, to provide for our needs and those of our family. (James 1:16-17)

Third, Jesus reminds us that our perspective should be a daily one. So many of us are living in the future, or in the past. Living in either of these places will inevitably produce worry, fear, and anxiety. Our perspective should be squarely focused on God meeting our daily needs. After all, we are not promised tomorrow nor do we know what tomorrow holds. *“Sufficient for the day,”* the Lord says, *“is its own trouble.”* (Matt. 6:34)

What needs do you currently have in your life? Jesus commands us to run to His throne of mercy and grace and ask our heavenly Father to provide for our daily needs. Let's take some time and do that right now.

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Forgive Us Our Debts

Our second great need is for forgiveness. Jesus says...

“and forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors.”

In the past, and even now, many Christians wonder why we need to continually confess our sins and ask for forgiveness when, thru Christ, our sins past, present, and future have already been forgiven.

The basis of this question is a failure to differentiate between our justification and sanctification. It is true that at the very moment a Christian surrenders his or her life to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the blood of Jesus covers their multitude of sins and justifies them before the righteous and holy God. Thus, in regards to our position before the holy God, our sins have been once and for all forgiven thru faith in Jesus Christ. In this sense, there is no need to confess our sins and seek forgiveness. We have already been forgiven by God thru the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross.

However, in regards to our sanctification - that glorious and sometimes painful process where God, thru His Holy Spirit, makes us holy – we are in great need of confession and forgiveness when we sin.

Why, you might ask?

Well, when we sin, our fellowship with the triune God is temporarily severed. Sin has a radical affect on our fellowship and intimacy with God. Thru Christ, our sin doesn't affect our *position* as a redeemed child of God. However, our sin does affect our *fellowship* and *communion* with God as a redeemed child. Thus, we should be in a constant state of repentance and confession that express our need for forgiveness.

Let's make sure we get this right! Sin affects our fellowship, our intimacy, and our closeness with God.

Have you wondered to yourself, or someone else for that matter – *“I just don't feel close and connected with God. I feel like God is light years away.”?*

Well, in many cases, in fact, in most cases, feeling disconnected from our heavenly Father is the direct result of unconfessed sin in our lives.

Not only do we have the great need to have our daily needs met, we also have the great need to be intimately connected with God in fellowship. One of our greatest purposes in this life is to be in unsevered, constant, intimate communion with our Creator. God the Father longs to be in a perpetual state of intimate fellowship with you. So much so in fact, He sacrificed His Son on the cross.

Sin is the great enemy of this core human need. Sin breaks our fellowship with God. Sin makes us, and rightly so, feel disconnected from God. This should not surprise us. Sin is an offense to God. God is holy and He has called us to be holy. (1 Peter 1:14-16) When we sin, we trade in our call to holiness for worldliness, immorality, idolatry, greed, and all sorts of debauchery.

God cannot be associated with sin. Thus, when we sin, our act of disobedience and rebellion severs our fellowship with God and leaves us feeling lonely, convicted, and disconnected from our Creator and Redeemer.

My guess is this; there are some here today who, as a result of unconfessed sin, feel disconnected to God. Jesus commands you to run to His throne of mercy and grace and ask your heavenly Father to forgive your sins. Let's take some time and do that right now!

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Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Finally, our third great need is for God's protection and deliverance from temptation and evil. Jesus says...

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Many scholars and Christians over the years have struggled with this statement. In James 1:13, the half-brother of Jesus writes...

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one.”

OK! So...if God does not tempt anyone, why then does Jesus command us to ask our Father God *“to lead us not into temptation.”*

The best explanation, which of course is a biblical one, is this – although God does not tempt His children, He does *test* them. Throughout the Bible, we see God testing His children with trials, and even sufferings, in order to deepen their faith and transform them into the likeness of Christ.

Thus, when Jesus commands us to ask our heavenly Father not to lead us into temptation, the most faithful explanation is that He is commanding us to ask our heavenly Father not to lead us into trials where we will succumb to temptation.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, God says thru the Apostle Paul...

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Again, this verse teaches the Christian that God allows temptation, but He does not lead us into temptation nor does He tempt us. On the other hand, God does lead us into tests and trails. In each case, whether God allows us to be tempted, or chooses to test us with trials and sufferings, the enduring and comforting promise is this – **HE IS FAITHFUL!**

Evil and temptation surround us at every corner of life. Our world is engulfed by evil. This is why Jesus commands us to petition our Father for help. Jesus commands us to pray for deliverance.

As God leads us into various trials and test, we are to pray that God will protect us and deliver us from evil and succumbing to temptation. We are to pray, especially during those times of trials and tests, that God would give us the spiritual wisdom to discern the “*way of escape.*”

Right now, some of you are in the white-hot crucible of a trial God has divinely ordained for your life. Such a trial is designed to transform you into the likeness of Christ. Yet, at the same time, Satan seeks to use this trial to tempt you to sin. God’s promise is that He is faithful and there is always a way of escape.

Jesus commands us to run to His throne of mercy and grace and ask our heavenly Father to protect us and deliver us from temptation and evil. Let’s take some time and do that right now!

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