

Farview Memorial Winter Bible Studies 2022

When You Pray: Mat 6:5-13

Summary

1. Introduction
2. The Importance of Learning How to Pray
3. Praying Like a Hypocrite
4. Enter Into Your Closet
5. Praying Like a Pagan
5. Our Father in Heaven
6. Petitions For His Glory
7. Petitions For Our Well-being
8. Ending Where We Began... Amen

Introduction

The Christian Counterculture: The Sermon on the Mount

The title given by the committee to this year's studies is "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus" which is a wonderful title and gives an appropriate description of the scene unfolding in what is commonly referred to as the sermon on the mount. We are told that Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain. From an elevated position Jesus sat and began to teach his followers. And there, at the feet of Christ Jesus, He taught them, and generations of his followers to come, what He wanted us to be and to do. If you, as every Christian should, have found yourself with a desire to please God, glorify Christ, and have an effective witness on the world, Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount give us the answer to the question of how.

While listening to the previous lessons one thing continued to stand out in my heart. Jesus is calling his people to be radically different from the world in which we live. Brother Jeremy's lessons showed us that the world says that we are by nature good and that to truly live to your potential you need to find your true self deep within, but Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." His blessed disciples acknowledge our spiritual poverty and understand that we have nothing of merit to offer and rest solely in God's mercy and grace. The world promotes sin as good and tries to destigmatize that which is evil. It preaches to never have regrets and to

never apologize, for that is a sign of weakness. Yet, Christ said, “blessed are those who mourn”; those who sorrow and grieve over sin and its effects, sin in our own lives, sin in the lives of others, and the hurt, destruction, and death that it causes. The world says, “to look out for number #1 and to run over anyone who tries to get in your way.” It says, “I have little time for the weak and little people because I am concerned about my own advancement.” Yet again, Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek” denoting “a humble and gentle attitude to others which is determined by a true estimate of ourselves” (Lloyd-Jones). Brother Jerry’s lesson showed us that the world says, “If you do wrong to me, I will do wrong to you.” Retaliation and revenge are important and necessary. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for Righteousness sake” and teaches us, “do not repay evil for evil, but evil with good.” Brother Moran’s lesson taught us that Jesus said in a world of moral and spiritual decay that we are to be the preserving agent of righteousness. Like salt preserves the decay of meat. He taught us that in a world that is consumed by darkness we are to be the light. “A city that is set on a hill, can not be hid.” And in Brother Aaron’s lesson we learned that in a world of “no-fault” divorce and selfish love, Jesus taught us to love self-sacrificially, to keep no record of wrongs, and that “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat 19:6b)

We see that Christ's teachings were radical in his day and are certainly radical to our 21st century world. If the church is to have an impact on the world in which we live for the advancement of God’s kingdom and the glory of His name, then it is essential that we be not conformed to the world, but radically countercultural. God’s historical purpose is to call out a people for himself; and that this people would be set apart and holy in all its outlook and behavior.

The Importance of Learning How to Pray

We are instructed by scripture:

- ***“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” Luke 18:1***
- ***“pray without ceasing,” 1 Thes 5:17***
- ***“...supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”
1 Tim 2:1***
- ***“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” Eph 6:8***
- ***“continuing instant in prayer” Rom 12:12***

The biblical mandate to pray is clear and unequivocal. We are to be constant in prayer, for all men, and to not lose heart. Andrew Murray rightly said of prayer that it is “the highest part of the work entrusted to us, the root and strength of all other work.” And Samuel Chadwick once said of prayer, “The one concern of the Devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing

from prayer-less studies, prayer-less work, prayer-less religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.” The more we pray, the more deeply we are drawn into communion with God. The more we pray, the more deeply transformed our hearts and minds become to be enabled to see and do the will of God in our lives. The more we pray, the more frequently we will see the manifestation of God’s power in our lives, families, churches, and world.

The title of our lesson is “When You Pray” which is taken directly from this portion of the sermon on the mount, where in verse 5, 6, and 7 of our text, Jesus says those very words, “when you pray”. Jesus is clearly assuming something about his disciples; that we do pray. And certainly, that is the case, for none of us would have ever come to a saving knowledge of Jesus apart from prayer. But what is also made clear is that Jesus knows that we do not pray as we should, and we are in need of being taught how to pray. To some of us our reaction is to say that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to pray, and some might go as far as to declare that they don’t need to be taught how to pray. This attitude, however, is one of the arrogant heart of man and does not find it’s conclusions in scripture. I believe we see the right attitude in the plea of the disciples in Luke 11. They had just been in the presence of Jesus while He poured His heart out to his Heavenly Father in prayer and said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray”. The study of God’s word concerning how to pray does not hinder sincere, spirit filled praying, but on the contrary, enables it, sustains it, and deepens it!

Praying Like a Hypocrite

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. - Mat 6:5

Jesus’s first imperative concerning prayer is that when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. He gave the same instruction previously concerning the giving of alms, and will give the same instruction concerning fasting directly following His instruction on prayer. And so, we must consider who the hypocrites were and how they prayed. The Greek word hypokrites, where we get our word hypocrite, was the word they used for an actor. Someone who in their day would typically wear a mask to hide their true identity in order to appear as someone they were not. Thus, when someone would act, or put on a performance, in order to appear righteous or spiritual to others while really concealing their true selves, Jesus called them hypocrites. Jesus goes on to tell us how they pray.

First, they love to pray. Certainly, nothing wrong with that. Secondly, they love to pray standing up. Again, we find several prayers throughout scripture where spiritual, God honoring prayers were offered while standing. Thirdly, they stood in synagogues and in the street corners.

Once again we find nothing wrong with the location of their prayers as we see Jesus praying in the synagogues and amongst the crowds at public gatherings. So what was the issue? Why does Jesus tell us not to pray like the Hypocrite? Because they prayed that, “they may be seen of men.” But, even in that we must ask the question, “what is wrong with that?” Jesus just previously in the same sermon said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (*Mat 5:16*). So should we be seen or not seen? Augustine once wrote, it is not “the being seen of men that is wrong, but doing these things for the purpose of being seen of men.” Notice the nuance. What Jesus is talking about is the motivation of the heart and mind of the Hypocrite. What does he want? He wants others to think he is holy, to think that he is spiritually superior, and to earn their admonition and praise. He has no real concern about the glory and praise of God, living holy, or spiritual sanctification. I think it's important to stop and turn our gaze upward and inward because it is our nature to attribute this description to other denominations, or other people, when if we are honest with ourselves before God, there is hypocrisy in our own heart, and we need the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to reveal it to us and cleanse us from it. I was recently challenged while reading a book on the subject of prayer, when I was asked to “compare the amount of time you spend in private prayer to the amount of time you spend in public prayer” (Ryken). I am forced to ask the question, if I am spending more time praying in public than in private am I really concerned about communing with God in prayer, or am I simply concerned about my religious reputation?

There is a reward for praying like a hypocrite. “Truly, I say to you, they have their reward.” The reward is exactly what the hypocrite desired. Their prayers often sound very impressive, and can have the impression of being very spiritual, yet by the time their prayer reaches it's end, they have already received all they will ever gain from it, the applause of men and a smug feeling of superiority. Nowhere is this more clearly depicted than in the parable of the pharisee and the publican:

Luk 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Enter Into Your Closet

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. - Mat 6:6

In contrast to the prayer of the hypocrite, Jesus taught us, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.” We see the example of this teaching lived out continually in the life of Jesus himself.

“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” Mat 14:23

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Mar 1:35

“But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.” Luk 5:15-16

While we have seen that there is a time and place for public prayer, the bedrock of our intimate communication with our Heavenly Father is found in private prayer. Do you have a private place of prayer? A place where you, like Jesus did, withdraw from the business, the multitudes, and the eyes of man, to commune with God? I vividly remember, while growing up in Alaska, my dad walking to the edge of our land on Lazy Mountain to a spot that overlooked the Matanuska River and the mountains that surrounded it. He never told us boys where he was going or announced his departure, but from time to time we all knew that in good times and bad, that Dad was going to or coming back from his spot. It was his praying spot. I recently went back to Alaska with my own family and we drove up the winding roads and back into the wilderness where my house had once sat. It was, to my surprise, gone. There was just land left. Land I used to weed eat in teenage disgust, land that I once played on for hours on end. As I walked back through the overgrown clearing and looked out to the river in the distance, I remembered my dad going out to his secret place to pray and thanked God for the example he set, and most of all for the good hand of God that has been upon my family and me.

As beautiful and sentimental as my Dad’s spot in Alaska is, the reality is that our private spots don’t have to be surrounded by mountains, overlooking the beauties of Alaska. They could be in a car, in a pew, in a bathroom stall, a dirty corner of a laundromat, or even a bowed head in a crowded room. It really doesn’t matter, because what was waiting for my dad in his spot and what is waiting for us in our own is exceedingly and abundantly more beautiful than an Alaska

landscape. Jesus told us “pray to thy Father which is in secret.” The almighty God of heaven is **in secret!** He meets with us and communes with us in our private place. Jesus goes on to say, “and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Not only is He there in secret, but He sees in secret. Our Heavenly Father sees us, hears us, meets with us, and has promised to reward us. And Jesus would later remind us in the same sermon “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mat 7:11)

Praying Like a Heathen

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. - Mat 6:7-8

The Greek word translated as vain repetitions in the KJV is bat-tol-og-eh'-o and it literally means to Stammer or Babble. By implication it means to talk much with little purpose, heap up empty phrases, mindless and verbose. The purpose for these long, mindless, empty repetitions according to Jesus was that “they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” Jesus teaches us to not pray like this.

A biblical illustration of this principle is seen in the prayers of the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. There the prophet of Jehovah calls out the unfaithful Israelites and challenges them to choose. “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kin 18:21). A challenge is presented by Elijah to the prophets of Baal. They were to prepare an altar with a bullock and pray to their gods to consume it. Elijah would do the same and pray to the Lord Jehovah to reveal who is truly God. The prophets of Baal prayed first:

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. - 1Ki 18:26-29

Notice that the prophets prayed for a long, long time. Crying aloud, babbling, heaping up empty phrases one on top of the other. They went as far as jumping and cutting themselves, all in an attempt to get the attention of their gods, begging them to see, hear, and respond. Elijah even mocks them at one point and says maybe Baal is talking, or on a trip, or possibly sleeping. Unsurprisingly, they never got a response. And then it was Elijah's turn. After rebuilding the altar of the Lord and preparing the bullock, he had 12 buckets of water poured upon the offering. Then he prayed:

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. - 1Ki 18:36-37

With a heart fixed on the Glory of God, in a brief and simple prayer, Elijah lifted his petition to the Lord. There was no need to heap up empty phrases to garner God's attention. There was no need to jump around and cut himself in order to arouse the focus of the Lord. Why, you ask? Because his Father knew what he needed before he asked him. Because in Elijah's secret place, surrounded by hundreds of others, God was in secret and God saw in secret, and God brought fire from heaven!

- We don't pray to tell God things that He didn't know before we told Him. We pray to commune with and appeal to a loving God who wants us to bring every need and worry before His throne (Guzik).
- The true God isn't impressed by the length or eloquence of our prayers, but the heart. "Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue. The eloquence of prayer consists in the fervency of desire, and the simplicity of faith" (Clarke).

Our Father in Heaven

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. - Mat 6:9

Having told us how not to pray, Jesus begins to teach us how to pray. One general observation that is clear in this model prayer is that it begins with God's glory and moves to our well-being. The first three requests have to do with God's glory: "...Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." and the remaining three requests; "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead

us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” have to do with our well-being. In this, Jesus shows us that the ideal order of prayer always has God’s glory before our needs. Then, in conclusion, we read “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” The prayer ends where it began with the adoration and glory of God (Ryken). We are to pray with our heart fixed on His name, His kingdom, and His will opposed to our name, our kingdom, or our will.

Our Father

In the entirety of the Old Testament, while the fatherhood of God is taught, there is no record as far as I could find, of anyone praying to God and addressing Him personally and directly as “Father.” Yet Jesus always came personally and directly to God in prayer calling Him Father. The only exception being on the cross when he prayed, “My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?”, when Jesus was being forsaken so we could be accepted. The fact that Jesus was teaching his disciples to approach God, calling him Father, was revolutionary. “He [Jesus] addressed God in a way no one else would dare. The way Jesus prayed was remarkable. What is more remarkable is that he made it possible for us to pray the same way” (Ryken).

We are forced then to ask the question, Who is God father to? Are we all God’s children? Are we all his sons and daughters? He is certainly the creator of us all, but the Bible makes clear that we are not by nature His children. Jesus once speaking to unsaved Jews claiming to be the children of God said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:44a). And the apostle Paul, once speaking about our nature before grace, said we all were, “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3b). Understanding this hard truth, that we are not God’s children by nature, we are forced to conclude that there must be a time in our lives, if we are able to approach God in prayer as our Father, when our nature is changed.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. - Joh 1:12-13

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. - Gal 4:4-7

We are made the children of God when we believe on the name of Jesus Christ and are born again! Not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God! Christ’s atoning death at Calvary made it possible that we could be adopted into a family that we do not belong to by nature. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). I cannot think of any more glorious thought. I cannot think of any

other frame of mind that would put our hearts and minds in a proper place to pray, than understanding all that Christ did for us in order that we can approach God as our Father.

Knowing God as Father allows us to pray to him in a personal, familiar, and trusting way. Children that love their fathers not only come to them in the warmest trust, but also with the sincerest reverence. Jesus reminded the disciples that our Father is in heaven. Not meaning that he is confined there, but to remind them of his transcendent greatness and sovereign rule. We can come personally to God in prayer but never mistake that for coming flippantly. And having an understanding of our Father's greatness, we are filled with confidence because "in God boundless wisdom and endless power are united" (Packer). So let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, with childlike trust and deep reverence.

Petitions for His Glory

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. - Mat 6:9b-10

It is at this point in the prayer that the petitions begin. As was stated before, the first three are concerned for the glory of God. The first is "Hallowed be thy name." Hallowed means to make holy, to consecrate to a sacred use. To be holy is to be set apart in purity. It is to be separated from that which is common and ordinary, and devoted to God's service. The inference here is not that our heavenly Father's name isn't already holy; "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." (1Sa 2:2). But the prayer is that God's name "would be celebrated, venerated, and esteemed as holy everywhere, and receive from all people proper honor" (Barnes). And when the Bible speaks of God's name it is in essence speaking of God himself. God as he has made himself known. His name reveals his divine attributes and eternal qualities.

It becomes very clear as we watch the news, look at social media, or interact in our communities that God's name is seemingly less and less hallowed by society. What should shock us more is that within the community of believers in our churches that God is not set apart as sacred and holy from the common tasks, hobbies, and entertainments of our lives. As Paul stepped off on the shores of Athens the Bible tells us that "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). When was the last time our spirit was stirred for the Holiness of God? The prophet Isaiah was given a vision of God;

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and

with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. - Isa 6:1b-3

Even the angels, sinless creatures, having been intimately near to the Lord for centuries, covered their faces before the uncreated, eternal holiness of God, and cried Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty!!! So we appeal to God “Hallowed be thy name.” That God would show to us a glimpse of his holiness, and that God would be given the unique reverence that His nature and character demand in our hearts, in our homes, in our churches, in our communities, and in the world.

Thy Kingdom Come

For a kingdom to be a kingdom it needs to have a few things. First, a King. It is not a democracy or a republic, but an absolute monarchy. Secondly, it needs subjects. Those who are loyal to the rule and jurisdiction of the King. And lastly, a purpose. A reason to exist and an end to pursue. For most of us democracy republic, loving Americans the thought of a monarchy leaves a bad taste in our mouths. It was for this reason that our founders fled Britain to establish a new country with a new form of government. One that would not be ruled by an absolute monarch, but would be formed of the people, by the people, for the people. And yet, a kingdom is exactly what Jesus taught his disciples and us to pray would come.

If history has taught us anything about kingdoms it has certainly shown us that people make for horrible monarchs. We have seen the proverbial saying “power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely” proven to be correct time and time again. That the concentration of power in the hands of an individual who is by nature a sinner is a scary and devastating thing. We must come to the conclusion that a kingdom is only as good as it’s king.

The Bible tells a story of two kingdoms, with two different kings, two different sets of subjects, and two different purposes. These kingdoms have been and continue to be in conflict with each other. One of these kingdoms is the Kingdom of God. Its king is King Jesus. It’s subjects are those who by God’s grace have pledged their fealty and submitted themselves to the rule of the King. It’s purpose is the destruction of sin, death, and the devil, and the establishment of King Jesus’ rule in the hearts of his people for the glory of God. The other is the kingdom of darkness. It’s king is Satan. It’s subjects are people in rebellion against God. It’s purpose is to have power, and to maintain a grip over the fealty of the souls of men. These kingdoms are in conflict. A conflict that has waged on Earth since man’s creation in the garden and wages on to this day. The good news is that we already know the outcome of this conflict. In the end God’s Kingdom wins and King Jesus, with his loyal subjects, will reign without the interference of darkness.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall

separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: - Mat 25:31-34

The kingdom of darkness, Satan it's king, and those in rebellion of God will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: - Mat 25:41

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. -Mat 25:46

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. -Rev 20:10

When we pray for His Kingdom to come, we are not praying that it would come into existence but for it's ascendancy. We are praying that the hearts, minds, and wills of men would fall prostrate before King Jesus and that His purposes would reign. The primary means established by God for the advancement and growth of His Kingdom is the proclamation of the gospel, the message of the cross and our crucified King! So as we pray, "thy kingdom come", we pray that the favor of God would rest upon the Kingdom work of the church, and that by His power and grace sinners would be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1:13). While the calling for God's kingdom to come has an immediate implication, it also has a prophetic yearning. A desire for what is yet to come. John the Revelator, having seen the heavenly vision, offers the last prayer in the whole of the Bible in Rev 22:20 when Jesus said, "Surely I come quickly" John responded, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." As much as we desire for the advancement of His Kingdom now, ultimately we long for the perfected kingdom that will one day be.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. - Rev 7:9-12



Thy Will Be Done

David once sang of the angels of heaven, “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure” (Psa 103:19-21). The heavenly angels are better servants than men are. They do God’s commandments, they listen to His word, and they faithfully carry out His pleasure. In heaven, God’s will is done. On Earth, while the eternal purposes of God will always be accomplished (Is 46:10), His preceptive will, meaning His commandments and precepts to men, are rarely obeyed. What Jesus teaches us to pray in His model prayer is, “that God, by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven” (Westminster SC).

If we are honest with ourselves, we often approach prayer with the objective of God submitting to our will as opposed to us submitting to His. All we really want is for God to use His power to accomplish, or put his stamp of approval on, the plan we have already laid out for ourselves. When we consider that the heart of man “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), and that the will of God is “good, and acceptable, and perfect” (Rom 12:2). It is no great enigma that we get ourselves in such a mess all the time, praying MY will be done. At the very heart of the purpose of prayer is that we would relinquish our own desires and yield to our Heavenly Father’s will and pleasure for our lives.

We must also come to the reality that God’s will is often different than what we would consider the ideal path. God has not hidden the fact that to follow God in submission to His will, often means to suffer for righteousness sake. When Christ, our perfect example, prayed, “not my will, but thine, be done,” It was in the agonizing reality of the suffering that lay before him. God’s will was that Christ should “[bear] our griefs and carry our sorrows”, that he would be “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities.” And yet, Christ knew that His Father’s will was best and submitted fully to it. Are we willing and ready to submit to God’s will for our lives? Are we like the Apostle Paul willing to say, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Php 1:20-21).

Petitions for Our Well-being

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. - Mat 6:11-13a

Jesus having shown us to first pray for God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will, then and only then, begins to show us how to pray for our daily needs (which we all have), our forgiveness (which we all require), and for deliverance from temptation (which we all face). Christ is teaching us to recognize and acknowledge our total dependence on our Heavenly Father. The first petition Christ makes is for God to give us this day our daily bread. Bread is essential for the sustaining of life and represents in this request, not just food for nourishment, but the basic necessities for our existence. To pray this daily, reminds us of a truth that many of us in our abundance seem to have forgotten, that everything we eat and all of the provision for our basic needs, are a divine gift, and we are utterly dependent upon the grace of God every moment of our lives. It is this reality that throughout human history God has been trying to teach his hard headed children. During the 40 years of wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, God provided them manna, bread from heaven, for them to eat. He had two main rules concerning the gathering of the manna that he told unto the people through Moses. First, they were to only gather enough for their family for that day and that day only. Second, on the 6th day, unlike the other days, they were to gather two days worth of manna, that they would have manna to eat on the Sabbath, when there would be no gathering. The principles that God was teaching are straight forward.

1. Daily dependence upon God
2. The sanctity of 1 day in 7
3. The sinfulness of selfishly hoarding that which God supplies.

And, still right away we see some of the Israelites gathering more than they needed with the desire to keep some for the next day. And others going out on the Sabbath trying to gather. What do you think happened? Exactly what God told them would happen. They woke up to find their leftover manna was filled up with maggots and stinking up their homes. And those who tried to gather on the Sabbath came home empty handed. God also gave them instruction to keep an omer of manna in a jar in the tabernacle. Why? So that for generations to come they could remind their children and grandchildren that for 40 years God provided for their needs and never missed a day!

When we pray "Give us this day our daily bread" we are reminded that God, our Heavenly Father, is responsible for our daily provisions. It teaches us to trust in the provider and not the provision! That just as fast as it comes, it can go, and we are not ultimately dependent upon the

bread to sustain us but upon the God who provides it to us and causes it to nourish us. When we pray to our Father in heaven to give us our daily bread we are reminded that He is personally concerned and interested in our personal, practical, material needs. He reminds us to not be anxious for these things “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Mat 6:33). God wants us to wake up each morning and go to sleep each night, knowing that no matter how expensive a loaf of bread gets, or how far the Dow Jones drops, the same God that provided for you today will provide for you tomorrow.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The debt that we owed to God because of our sins was more than we could ever pay. Our sins, past, present, and future were imputed to Christ on the cross and our unpayable debt was paid in full by Jesus (Col 2:14). As long as we remain outside of Christ none of what Christ has paid applies to us. When we are born again of the Spirit of God, The Spirit applies the finished work of Christ in us, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us, and we stand justified before God. The work the Spirit does is an eternal work. Being adopted as a child of God our sin debt is replaced with “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” and we “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1: 4-5). Knowing this, one might ask why do I need to pray for forgiveness then. Though we stand forgiven in Christ, the sin we commit as God’s children still interferes with the intimacy we are made to enjoy with Him. The plea for forgiveness in the Lord’s prayer is that of daily forgiveness. As long as we are in this flesh we will battle with sin, and as long as we battle with sin our intimacy with our father will be disturbed. God is not only concerned with sustaining our lives, but He is even more concerned about sustaining the intimacy of our fellowship with Him.

Jesus made clear in this prayer and several other places in scripture that there is a direct relationship between our forgiveness of others and God’s forgiveness of us. Directly, following the Lord’s prayer Jesus expounded on this petition knowing how difficult it would be for His disciples to understand and apply.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. - Mat 6:14-15

It was the only petition in the prayer that came with a condition attached to it. We live in a world that is devastated by sin. And no one, including ourselves, is untouched by that reality. Our sins have wounded God and others. And it is inevitable that we have been wounded ourselves by the sins of others. “God has a way to heal those wounds, a way to ease the pain inflicted by the sins

of others. It is called forgiveness. Once God has given us the grace to be forgiven, we also need his grace to be forgiving” (Ryken).

Jesus once told a parable to explain the relationship between our forgiveness and God’s forgiveness.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. Mat 18:21-35

Jesus was a master storyteller, and this parable causes the reader to gasp at the incongruity of the man’s experience of receiving the king’s forgiveness with his response to his own debtor. You are caused to ask the question, how could he be so callous and unforgiving when he was shown such great mercy himself? As has already been said, as subjects of God’s Kingdom we have been forgiven of an infinite debt that we could not pay. We have been shown mercy from receiving the just punishment for our deeds, and shown amazing grace that we did not deserve. “Behold the man upon the cross. My sin upon His shoulder. Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.” These lyrics remind us of the debt that was paid on our behalf. As the recipients of such mercy, we are compelled and called to show mercy to those who sin against us. We cannot expect our relationship with our

heavenly father to be experienced in the fullness of intimacy that the Lord desires and that we long for, if we harbor anger, bitterness, and resentment towards others.

True forgiveness lies down the right to be angry, the claim for repayment, the need for retaliation. True forgiveness is costly. True forgiveness has no limits. The Greek word translated here forgive is *aphiēmi*. It literally means to send away. Truly forgiving someone is a release of all of the bitter and self-destructive feelings that hurt our intimacy with God and destroy our relationships with others. As we pray for daily provision, let us as Christ showed us, pray daily for our own forgiveness and for the grace to forgive others.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

I believe the main principle of this petition is clear. It is a plea for the providential help of our Heavenly Father in our daily battle with the temptation of sin. The tempter is not God, for James said clearly, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jas 1:13). And a proper rendering of evil at the end of the petition would be ‘evil one’ (see Mt 13:19, 13:38, Eph 6:16, etc.). Thus, the devil is the great tempter of God’s people to sin, and whom we need to be rescued from.

In 2014, Brother Steve Skinner taught a lesson at the Old Union Minister School called, “The Adversary.” It’s one of my personal favorite lessons and I encourage you to listen to it. But, in the introduction of that lesson Brother Skinner spoke briefly about his combat experience in Vietnam, and I will never forget him talking about standing on a mountain looking out over the mountainous landscape, covered in triple canopy jungle, and how beautiful it would have been to look at had it not been for the things that you couldn’t see. For under those trees was an adversary whose purpose was to kill him.

In this world, that can often present itself in a way that looks appealing and enticing to us, we have a great adversary. And every day that God gives us breath in our lungs we are engaged in spiritual warfare “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). No Christian can withstand the satanic attacks that are levied against us in his or her own strength. And we will fall, and mighty will it be, if we do not pray as the Lord Jesus taught us in this passage. Loved ones, I am sick of losing comrades in this fight for the souls of men and the glory of God.

There are many practical biblical instructions for avoiding sin and being triumphant over temptation. We should saturate ourselves with God’s word. We should surround ourselves with brothers and sisters in Christ that will hold us accountable for our actions. We should steer clear of occasions of sin altogether, but for any of this to be effective or accomplished we must first learn to pray the way Jesus taught us to. Our daily battles can end in defeat before they ever

become a reality in our lives, because the key to success starts with the words, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” It starts upon our faces before God with the plea, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” As vital as it is to pray for daily provision and daily forgiveness, it is equally vital to pray that God would daily do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, keep us from temptation and deliver us from the evil one.

This principle of prayer that Christ was teaching his disciples implies a few simple truths that are vital to remember. First, our enemy is strong. He is relentless, subtle, crafty, and deceptive, and at this very moment with his innumerable band of fallen angels is plotting your spiritual downfall. The Evil One wants to disgrace our witness, split up our families, and wreck our ministries. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). Second, we are weak. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor 10:12). “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas 1:14). Even a surface study of our biblical heroes will quickly reveal the weakness of man. Noah, Abraham, David, and Peter to name a few all had moments, in their weakness, where they caved to temptation and evil. Finally, “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1Jn 4:4b). God alone is uncreated and eternal. Satan is a finite, created being. God is omnipotent and omnipresent. Satan is not. In the wilderness temptation, Satan tempted Christ during a time of great physical and mental weakness that comes with 40 days and nights of fasting, and Jesus triumphantly overcame those temptations. “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). By Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection He defeated sin and death and undid the work of the devil. “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15). “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). One day the absolute and eternal defeat of evil and the Evil One will be manifested before all of creation. We can confidently petition our heavenly Father knowing that He has power over the tempter and will deliver us if we call upon His name.

Ending Where We Began... Amen

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. - Mat 6:13b

We come to the end of this model prayer in a very similar spot to where we began, exalting the name of God, and acknowledging that the kingdom, power, and glory are His and His alone. It takes us back to principles at the heart of genuine, effective prayer;

1. Surrendering to the reign of King Jesus in our lives



2. Acknowledging our total dependence on our Father of infinite power and provision.
3. Humbling ourselves in view of the excellency, dignity, and worthiness of God.

Which brings us to Amen. The Hebrew word that means “I agree” or “so be it.” It was a way of testifying and affirming something to be most certainly true. And as we meditate upon the words and teaching of Christ concerning prayer, our hearts leap within us as if to say Amen, Amen!

