

## PRAYING FOR OURSELVES

Matthew 6:11-13

**Intro:** We have covered some wonderful teaching in the Sermon on the Mount which, in the Gospel of Matthew, begins with chapter 5. The Lord had been telling them what He wanted them to be (the Beatitudes), and then He followed that with various instructions concerning what He wanted them to do. The teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, as well as the way they lived, had concealed the truth of God. And so there was much that the Lord needed to correct.

In our study of this great message we have gotten down to the Lord's teaching about prayer. And even on this subject the Lord had to tell them not to pray like the scribes and Pharisees did, and certainly not to pray like the heathen Gentiles did. They were not to pray to be seen by men, but each was to have a secret place where he could enjoy fellowship with God alone. Nor were they to use the meaningless repetition of words as though that would break down God's resistance so that they could get from Him what they wanted. We find all of these instructions in verses 5 through 8. They were to realize that they were approaching an omniscient God, an all-knowing God, Who knew their needs even before they came to pray.

And then in verse 9 the Lord proceeded to give them *a model prayer*. We can call it "the Lord's prayer" if we mean by that title that He gave it to them, but if we call it the Lord's prayer because we believe He prayed this prayer, then we are very mistaken. Nor does it seem that the Lord intended that this prayer should be prayed as it is. Since this prayer is used in many churches Sunday after Sunday as a part of church ritual, I believe it is safe to say that this is the only prayer that millions of professing Christians pray because many of these same people do not pray before they eat their meals. Some would argue that it is better for people to pray this prayer than not to pray at all, but that statement is very questionable. If this prayer is used just in a ritualistic and formal way, it is probably the case that the people who use it that way know very little about what true prayer is. So let us treat this as a model prayer, and seek to learn with the Holy Spirit's help, what the Lord Jesus wanted us to learn about the nature of true prayer.

We have already learned, I trust, from verses 9 and 10, that prayer is not just asking God for certain things that we need, nor what other people need, but true prayer begins with the recognition of our special relationship to God, coupled with the acknowledgment of His glory and majesty. And then this is followed with words which show our concern for the work of God, and the will of God, upon the earth. We look forward to the

day which is sure to come when the will of God will be done on earth just as it is done in heaven.

But then the Lord quickly moved on to show the disciples *how they should pray for themselves*. And this is where we are today – in verses 11, 12, and the first part of verse 13. (Read.)

Since these requests are in the plural, I would be inclined to think that the Lord indicated that these are requests also that we need to keep in mind as we pray for others. After all, what we need, is what others need. And so to pray in the right way for ourselves, is a good way to prepare to pray for others. And be sure to notice that the requests include both physical and spiritual needs. Our daily bread is a material need we have for our physical bodies while forgiveness and deliverance from temptation are spiritual needs.

Before we begin to consider these important words which our Savior has given to us, let me repeat a suggestion that I have made many times before. And it is this: *Make all of the prayers you find in the Bible your constant study and meditation*. It is certainly true that one reason the Lord has preserved the prayers we find in our Bibles, is because they can be a tremendous help to us as we seek to learn how to prayer. And remember that the Psalms are especially important for all of us as we should be continually seeking to learn more about what it means to pray according to the will of God.

But now let us take each of these requests in the second part of this prayer which the Lord gave to His disciples – *and to us!*

The first is:

### **I. “GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD” (Matt. 6:11).**

God in His Word places a special emphasis on the present day in which we are living. This does not mean that we do not prepare for tomorrow. We are not like the Epicureans whose philosophy was, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” That is a fool’s philosophy, and it can lead to all kinds of sin and trouble. And yet at the same time we need to realize that for us tomorrow may never come. All that we can be absolutely sure of is that God has given us this day in which we are living. Solomon in one of his many proverbs said, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).

Do you remember the parable of a certain rich man which the Lord told,

and which is recorded for us in Luke 12:16-21? Let me read it for you.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

And we can add to these words what James said on this subject:

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (James 4:13-15).

I have gone to all of these passages of Scripture to show how inclined we are to treat the future as though it were just as certain as the present, or the past. People generally take the future for granted, and often live as though they were going to be here forever.

But then the stock market takes a sudden fall. Or a job which was thought to be secure comes to an end. Or sickness abruptly strikes us, and the future is completely changed.

Here in the US we are surrounded with an abundance of food, and we do not think in terms of looking to the Lord for our “daily bread.” We get paid by the month, or by the week. Some are paid by the day. But we are inclined to think that with our money in hand, we are secure until the next pay day comes around. It would be interesting to know how many of us have the practice of praying for each day’s supply of food.

What was the Lord seeking to teach His disciples when He taught them to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”? Bread, of course, was the staple food of that day, but the expression applied to all of their food.

This is obviously a morning prayer. The Lord was teaching His disciples that God, their heavenly Father, provided for His children, and He did it on a daily basis. And so He was teaching them their daily dependence upon the Lord for the food which they needed. After all, daily food is important for all of us. And we have many other daily physical and material needs. God is the One Who supplies them all, and it is good for us to remember this every morning, and to pray for the Lord's provision for each day. Your freezer and your cupboards may be full, but still it is the Lord Who supplies. And there isn't anyone who doesn't suddenly wake up if the supply of food on any day is cut off.

But let us move on to the next request.

## **II. "AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS" (Matt. 6:12).**

Verses 14 and 15 of this chapter seem to indicate that what the Lord had in mind when He spoke of "debts," was *sins*. In Luke's account of this prayer, he used the word "sins." This is the way Luke expressed it: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

Just yesterday I was reading in Mark 11, and I came across these two verses: 25 and 26. This is what they say:

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

This does not mean that we are forgiven of our sins because we forgive others who have sinned against us. We are forgiven because of the blood our Lord shed when He died on the cross for our sins. But it does mean that we cannot truly confess all of our sins if we are unwilling to forgive that person who in some way, or any way, has sinned against us. How often we come to our heavenly Father confessing our sins, and yet at the same time we are unwilling to forgive some other person who has sinned against us. To harbor an unforgiving spirit against someone else is itself sin. The remembrance of our own sins, and God's gracious forgiveness, should make us even more willing to forgive others who sin against us. That seems to be clear from our Lord's words.

But let me follow along another line. How consistent are we about confessing our sins? The only way we can remain sensitive to sin is by the daily exposure of our hearts to the Word of God. It is only as we walk in daily fellowship with our Lord that we are made conscious of how sinful

we are in our hearts. And we usually will come to the conclusion when we consider how others have sinned against us, that their sin has not been nearly as bad as our sins have been against our heavenly Father. Thus, the acknowledgment of our sins is one of the great instruments which our heavenly Father uses to humble our hearts before Him.

But let us go on to the third petition in this series and last petition in this series..

### **III. “AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL” (Matt. 6 13a).**

It is probably more accurate that the latter part of this verse be translated, “But deliver us from the Evil One.” The definite article “the” is in the Greek text.

How are we to understand the first part of this verse in the light of what James has written in James 1:13-15?

13 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:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

God tries us, as He tried Abraham when He called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Often we sin when we are being tried, but it is not because God makes the temptation too great for us; it is because of the sin that is in our hearts, as verse 14 above explains. God has given us the promise that we have in 1 Cor. 10:13:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Our Lord’s teaching that our heavenly Father would not lead us into temptation and ultimately into sin, means that God would so graciously watch over us that He would not permit us to be overcome by temptation and sin. If the Lord is to withdraw His restraining hand from any one of us at any time, there is no telling what we would do. And this is where we all need to be very, very careful. If we are want to be kept from sin, then we must never put ourselves in a position where we might be overcome by sin and by the Evil One. We cannot afford to play with temptation and sin. As surely as we do we will be overcome. That same passage which gives us 1 Cor. 10:13 which I have just read to you, also gives us in these

words in the verse just before it,

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Every day we live we need to beware of the Evil One. He will take advantage of us in any way that he can. He seeks our downfall. He knows our weaknesses. He is not greater than our heavenly Father, but he is greater than we are.

“The Evil One” as a title for Satan indicates that the effect of his work is always bad. The Devil always leaves people worse than they were before. When he makes sin appear to be beneficial to us, it is only to deceive us. The place to learn the truth about Satan and his work is the Word of God. There we have the Devil exposed for what he is. We are engaged in a constant warfare with him, and that is why we need to put on the whole armor of God as the Apostle Paul instructed us to do in Ephesians 6. There can be no compromise with sin. And we must strongly and consistently love righteousness and hate iniquity, even as our Lord did. Our struggle every day is with sin within our own hearts, as well as all of the sin that is in the world around us. And it is only as we are fortified by the whole armor of God, being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, that we will be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

**Concl:** So what does this section teach us about the way we should be praying for ourselves, and for others?

It teaches us to recognize how utterly dependent we are upon God for our daily needs, right down to the food that we eat. And that it is right and proper that, at the beginning of every day, we should pray that the Lord would give us our “daily bread.” And if we do this about our food, then it would follow that we should look to Him *daily* for all of the other physical and temporal needs that we have.

I was not quite a teenager at the time of the Great Depression. But I never worried about whether or not we would have food to eat or clothes to wear. Why didn't I? Was it because my folks were not concerned about my Dad's job? I didn't know until I was grown that from day to day my Dad did not know how long he would have a job. But he never let us, his children, know how big the trouble was that he was facing. We trusted him completely, and that is exactly how our heavenly Father wants us to trust Him.

Secondly, we need to be faithful in confessing our sins to our heavenly Father. This, too, needs to be daily. We want to be extremely careful that we live to please our heavenly Father. And, at the same time, we need to

manifest grace toward those who may wrong us, remembering how much the Father has had to forgive us – and so we forgive those who have sinned against us.

Finally, we need to pray against sin each day. Confess the sins we have committed, but pray for deliverance from sin this day, and in all coming days.

There are obviously other things that we need to pray for as we think of our relationship with our heavenly Father, but these are some of our most basic needs. And so let us take these to heart, and act upon them. It is in obeying the Word of God that we will experience our heavenly Father's greater blessings, and this also is the path that leads to greater and greater usefulness in this world of sin where people live as though God does not exist at all.