

PRAYING FOR OURSELVES

Matthew 6:9-13

Part 3

Intro: Those of us who read the Bible are aware that in the Bible we have the record of many prayers that the people of God have prayed from the beginning of time down to the time when the Bible was finally completed. They are in the Bible not just to show us how people prayed in Bible times, but they have been recorded to teach us how we should pray, and for what we should pray.

Those who have made a study of Bible prayers are in general agreement that there are five kinds of prayer:

- 1) Worship, which would include praise.
- 2) Thanksgiving.
- 3) Confession.
- 4) Intercession, which is prayer for others.
- 5) Petition, which is a word used for personal requests.

There are other words for prayer that are used in the Bible, such as, supplications and requests. But what I am seeking to impress on your minds and hearts today is that the Bible is full of prayers, and they are there for our instruction in learning how to pray. When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, I am sure that they did not realize how much they could have learned from the Scriptures that they already had. Nevertheless, in prayer and in everything else that has to do with our relationship with God, there never has been and never will be a greater teacher than our Lord.

One thing you will notice as you read the prayers of Scripture, is that in many of them *the people who prayed were praying for themselves!* Often it was because they were in trouble of some kind. On other occasions it was after they had experienced some special blessing from the Lord. But the Bible certainly teaches us that we need to pray for ourselves; we need to bring our needs and the things which trouble us to the Lord in prayer. In the prayer we are considering in Matthew 6 we see that the Lord was emphasizing that we bring both our physical needs and our spiritual needs to the Lord in prayer – and we all have both physical and spiritual needs.

The requests that the Lord gave to His disciples concerning how they should pray for themselves, are found in verses 11, 12, and the first half

of verse 13:

1) The first is, "Give us this day our daily bread."

2) The second is: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

The requests in verse 13 can be divided into two, or we can consider them two parts of the same request. I am inclined to think of them as two parts of the same request.

3) And so the third is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

As you can see, the first request is for physical needs; the second and third are concerned with spiritual needs.

I. THE FIRST REQUEST – FOR PHYSICAL NEEDS: "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD" (Matt. 6:11).

In these days when we have refrigerators and freezers, and our kitchens are full of cupboards stocked with food, it may be a little hard for us to think of our need for the Lord's provision day by day. But the Lord by this request was teaching His disciples to realize that their daily food (not just "bread") came from Him, and that it was proper for them to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in His provision for them. And so the habit of having prayer before our meals grew out of this.

When the Lord led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, His provision for them was day by day. On the sixth day the Lord gave them two times what they needed so that they would not have to go out to gather manna on the Sabbath Day. And you probably remember that if they tried on the first five days to save manna over from one day to the next, it got wormy and gave off a very offensive odor. In Psa. 145:15-16 we read:

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Adam Clarke's comment on this verse is worth thinking about. He said, "What a hand is this that holds in it all the food that meets the desires and necessities of the universe of creatures!" The food supply of all creatures, human beings included, is measured out on a daily basis by the God of the universe Who is our heavenly Father. And He continues to do it even though most humans don't recognize the goodness of the Lord in His daily provision for our needs. But He can withhold His provision any time He sees fit to do so.

After beginning this prayer with “our Father” (note that “our” is plural), the plural is resumed with the request we are considering here in verse 11. With whom would a child of God be more apt to pray than with the other members of his family, and so this is a truth which needs to be taught in every family, and the father would be the one who is responsible to teach it. And so we should bow our heads and thank the Lord whenever we sit down to eat.

It is apparent also from a passage like Isa. 33:15-16 that such knowledge is to cause us to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Listen to what Isaiah had to say about this:

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

This does not mean that we remain idle and refuse to work, thinking that the Lord will provide anyway. No, it does not mean that. But it means that we are calling upon God in faith. James tells us in James 1:17:

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

And Paul told the Corinthian believers in 1 Cor. 10:31:

31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

It is important to realize that how a family handles its food, and whether or not they sincerely give thanks to God for their meals, is a very strong indication of the spiritual life of the family.

I read of a family years ago where the father refused to let his family thank God for their food. He said “I have worked hard to earn the money to buy this food, and you need to thank me, not God, for what is on this table.” God doesn’t always do what He did in this case, but it was just a short time after that when the father was stricken with an illness and was not able to work. He recovered after a short time, but not before he recognized that God was the One Who did provide their food for them.

But let’s go on to the second request in this series.

II. THE SECOND REQUEST – FOR SPIRITUAL NEEDS: “AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS” (Matt. 6:12).

Obviously, as Barnes said in his commentary, the word “debts” is used in a figurative sense, that is, it represents a different kind of a debt from a money debt. It is true that Malachi told the people of God in his day that they had robbed God by not bringing their tithes and offerings to Him in those days when they were still under the Law. But that is not what our Lord was talking about when He taught His disciples to pray, “forgive us our debts.”

If you look down to verses 14 and 15 you will see how the Lord spoke of forgiveness again. But there He mentioned their “trespasses,” which is another name for SINS!

In Luke’s version of this model prayer, this is what He said about forgiveness:

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us (Luke 11:5).

So the debt we owe to God is a debt of sin. All of our sins were covered by the blood of Christ, by His sacrificial death on the Cross. But just as we have to believe to appropriate that forgiveness, so after we are saved we are also daily guilty of sinning against God, and we need to confess our sins that we might claim forgiveness for them and cleansing, and be restored to fellowship with the Members of the Godhead.

But the Lord is talking here about two ways we have of sinning. We sin against God when we sin, but there are also times when we sin against each other, or even against people who do not know the Lord. And that is sin against the Lord also. However, when we read this statement in the prayer, we need to ask ourselves, how do I treat people when they sin against me. That is, they say something about me that is not true. Or they deliberately do something to try to hurt me. Or maybe they say that some of us in our family said something about someone in their family which is not good, but we know that did not happen! You probably can put your own circumstances into this verse, some situation when some person, Christian or not, who sinned against you. The question is: How forgiving are we? Is it hard for people to get back into our good graces once they have offended us? Do we wait until people ask for forgiveness, or do we forgive them before they ask us to forgive them. How wonderful it is to

be able to tell someone who has offended you, “Oh, I forgave you right after you did that, said that.” To forgive before we are asked to forgive is Christ-like.

But what about our sins against the Lord which often involves other people? Do you and I confess our sins as we commit them, or do we let day after day go by without confessing our sins to God and to anyone else who may have been offended by our sin? What if it is a sin which nobody else knows about except you and God? You see, what the Lord meant by His words in verses 14 and 15 is that we can’t really be forgiven by God if we still hold a grudge against that person who has sinned against us. In other words, things can’t really be made right with the Lord unless they are made right with the people we have sinned against. In the final analysis, only God can forgive sins, but it is because we want to please God that whenever it is possible, we seek His grace in order to forgive those who have sinned against us.

And how often do we forgive them? Our Lord said not just seven times, but seventy times seven. See Matt. 18:22. The Lord has put no limitation on us, and we are not to put limitation on the number of times we will forgive others.

What a lot of fuel for meditation there is in these words by our Lord. We are all guilty of overlooking our own sins, especially sins that nobody on earth knows about. As dear old Dr. Bach used to say, “Keep short accounts with God.” And we all need to keep short accounts with each other too.

But now the third part of our text which have to do with “us.”

**III. THE THIRD REQUEST – AGAIN, FOR SPIRITUAL NEEDS:
“AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER
US FROM EVIL” (Matt. 6:13a).**

There are not only times when we need to seek forgiveness for our sins, but it is even better to ask the Lord to keep us from sinning against Him, *and against others.*

How are we going to explain our Lord’s words, “And lead us not into temptation,” as though the Lord might do this. Especially when James tells us in his epistle,

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 (James 1:13-14).

So we know that God does not tempt us to sin. But sometimes he permits sin. So one explanation of this petition could be that we are to ask the Lord not to let us be overcome by temptation. We also have responsibilities in this. We are hypocritical to pray such a prayer, and then intentionally put ourselves in a position where we will be tempted. We need to ask our Father in heaven every day that He would keep us from sin.

But another thought is also in this verse. This same word translated “temptation,” can mean *a trial, a testing*. With Job’s wife their trial became an occasion of sin, and so she told her husband to “curse God, and die.” Sometimes trials, especially when they extend over a long period of time, get us discouraged, and then our faith fails, and we say things, or do things, which we afterward regret because we can see after the fact that they have been sin.

Now the reason I believe that the two requests here at the beginning of verse 13 go together, is because while God does not tempt us to sin, *yet the Devil does!* But you might say where do you find the Devil in this verse. Let me explain.

The Greek which is translated, “and deliver us from evil,” could be translated, “and deliver us from the evil,” which many Greek scholars think should be translated, “and deliver us from the Evil One.” And personally I believe this is what the Lord was saying. Our archenemy is the Devil. His object is always to drag us down into sin. *Only God can keep this from happening. And He does it through Christ, and through the Word, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The Devil is “the god of this world.” He blinds people to the real consequences of sin, and it is against him that we are engaged in the conflict which literally envelopes the world today. He knows that his time is short, and he intends to do as much damage as he can before he is cast forever into the lake of fire. This part of this prayer should be in our hearts and on our lips every day that we live: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.” But we have nothing to fear if we are humbly depending upon the Lord to meet our daily needs, and if we are consistently making sure that we are walking in fellowship with

God and with each other. And we need to do all we can to be at peace even with people who do not know the Lord. Paul wrote to the Roman believers in Rom. 12:18-21:

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

And to the churches of Galatia Paul wrote in Gal. 6:10:

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Concl: Now none of this will do us any good unless we begin immediately to pray as our Lord has taught us to pray in these verses where He was addressing Himself to “us.” These are terribly wicked days in which we live, and they seem to be getting worse all of the time. People are using their supposed freedom to throw themselves right into the traps of the Evil One where they face eternal damnation. God seems to be silent now, but He will not be silent forever. And woe to those who have insist-ed on having their own way, which they think is right, but which leads to death and to hell. May God keep us faithful, but let us be assured that only He can keep us true to Himself and to His Word.

He has taught how we need to pray for ourselves, and so let us pray.