

## 30. The pattern of prayer to follow

May 22, 2016

Let's pretend that we have a really great patriotic President of the United States with honesty and integrity and we have his personal cell phone number which he personally answers any time of the day, because he is really close to us and loves us and willing to do just about anything for us. If we have some problems with the federal government, would we not pick up the phone and call him for help? It would be almost silly and crazy not to do so, huh?

We have Someone who is in the highest position in the universe. It is our God. He allows us to call Him any time, day or night, from any place. His prayer reception coverage is better than any human's cell phone connections. He listens to our prayers instantly and responds instantly in one of three ways – YES, NO, or WAIT.

Even though we have this great direct line to our Lord which we call "prayer", in most cases, I can comfortably say that the majority of born-again Christians do not have any idea what kind of power they are tapping into through their prayers.

The disciples of Jesus often saw their Master Jesus spend all night alone in prayer to the Father in heaven. They realized that He had a prayer life that they didn't have. That is why they came to Him and asked Him to teach them how to pray. They didn't ask Him how to cast demons out or how to preach or how to expound the Word of God, but how to pray. It is that important.

While the Word of God is God's voice to us, prayer is our voice to the Father in heaven. Besides, prayer, like many aspects of our walk with God, does not come naturally to us. It must be taught. There are a few things we must know and understand about prayer. Who can teach us better than the Son of God Jesus Himself? Let's hear directly from the mouth of Jesus our Savior.

### A. IT IS A FORMAT, NOT A SPELL

*Matthew 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

"In this manner" does not mean to pray using only these words, but to pray in this way. People often reduce this prayer to an empty recitation. As we already learned that it is exactly what the Lord Jesus said not to do in v7. The Lord's Prayer is a great prayer, but it does not have power in itself. We cannot and should not use it as any sort of a magic spell to bring a solution to every tight situation.

Jesus shows us how He would have us address God – "our Father." The words speak of a family relationship, a closeness, a respect, and the accessibility of a parent. Additionally, He tells us how we are to envision the Father – "in heaven," literally.

Jesus doesn't tell us to call Him "Friend," as though we were equal with Him. Or "Master," as though we were slaves. Or "King," as though we were His subjects. Rather, our relationship with God is that of children to daddy. I love that.

"Hallowed be Your name" is a rather important thing we should know about. The word 'hallowed' is coming from the Greek word 'hagiazō.' It means "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God, revered." Our God's character must be held in the highest respect, set apart from every other name that falls from our lips.

If you've been using God's name in vain, please stop now. You have no idea whom you are messing with. And some of you often say, "Oh, my God," or "Jiminy Christmas." What does that sound like? In my opinion, it is a very similar way of using God's name in vain. Don't use them, either.

The Lord's Prayer is composed of six requests. The first three ask for the kingdom to come in v9-10. And the last three are for God to meet the needs of His people until the kingdom arrives in v11-13.

## **B. THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE – HIS KINGDOM, HIS WILL**

*Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

When we come to v10, we cross the border into the domain of His rulership. To request that His will be done is to submit to it in our own lives.

His name. His kingdom. His will. How quickly we pass over these thoughts in prayer, but how often we forget them altogether! However, when we start our prayers by concentrating on God and His character, we get to have a right perspective. And when the right perspective is established, and authority is put in its proper place. Whether we praise Him or not, He is who He is. He doesn't need us, rather we need Him desperately.

Somehow, in their twisted false doctrines, some Bible teachers and their followers have created God in the image of a divine bellhop. Prayer, for those people, is the ultimate in-room service with no tipping and everything is charged to that great credit card with unlimited balances in heaven. Prayer is not a shopping list that we hand to God and tell Him, "Get going, boy."

We don't get everything we pray to the Lord. Would you give your teenager your credit card without any control? Of course not. That teenager might buy something that would be harmful to him, not to mention that he might take you to a bankruptcy court. When God answers our prayer with "No" or "Wait," we tend to think that we didn't get the answers to our prayers. Although He answered it, we just didn't like what we heard.

## **C. MAKING OUR NEEDS KNOWN TO GOD**

*Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.*

In v11, the emphasis shifts horizontally to "our daily bread." The reference is symbolic of the necessities of life, not the luxuries.

*Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

*Psalms 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.*

Of course, some of us come up with a question to the Lord for His different treatments to His followers. While one believer gets blessings beyond what to do with all of them, you barely make ends meet by robbing Peter to pay Paul. Sometimes, you cannot even do that. Sounds familiar? You may feel like a stepchild of God and ask Him, "Why?" I don't have an answer for you. But I know one thing for sure: our God is faithful. We have a tendency to think that God has to meet our needs according to our way. There lies a big flawed theological problem on our part. Remember this: Our God keeps His promises in His own way, because He is our Sovereign God, not our lackey.

## **D. FORGIVENESS FROM HEAVEN, FORGIVENESS FROM US**

*Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.*

The transition from bread to forgiveness in v12 is not as abrupt as it seems, because what bread is to our bodies, forgiveness is to our souls.

The idea of asking God to forgive us is not that our forgiveness of others earns us the right to be forgiven. Forgiven people should be forgiving people. Let's stop making excuses why we cannot forgive others while we ask God for His forgiveness for our sins. If we exercise this biblical principle, we would not have church splits or fights.

There are sins of commission and sins of omission. We commit our sins because we do what we should not do. And there are sins of omission that is something we should do, but we don't do. If we choose not to forgive other people for their sins against us, we are committing a sin of omission.

While we are on the subject of forgiveness, I must say this. Some Christians come from terrible past – the past marred with crimes, or drug, alcohol, or sexual addiction, or you fill the blank. Listen carefully, now. If you asked the Lord to forgive you from your sins with a broken and contrite heart, He has forgiven you. However, if you think that God hasn't forgiven you for your past, now you are committing additional sins:

**1) What you are doing is like telling the Lord that He is a liar by not forgiving you when you asked Him with an earnest heart.**

*Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.*

**2) What you are doing is like telling the Lord that your sins are too much for Him to handle. It translates as pride.**

## **E. TEMPTATION AND DELIVERANCE**

*Matthew 6:13a And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.*

Refusing to forgive others can be a big temptation because of the hurt we experienced. Naturally, unforgiving heart will take us to be tempted in many other sins.

To pray "do not lead us into temptation" seems to imply that if we don't pray, God will lead us into temptation. Thus He becomes the One who solicits evil. However, the verb "do not lead us" is a permissive imperative and should have been translated, "Do not allow us to be led into temptation," for clear understanding.

*James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

The heart of the petition, then, is asking God to rescue us from the one who lies in wait, hungering for our souls – the devil. True prayer is always offered knowing that how weak we are in ourselves, and how much we need the power of God. The temptation is literally a test that is permitted by the Lord for our character training, not always a solicitation to do evil. God has promised to keep us from any testing that is greater than what we can handle.

*1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

## **F. A FINISHING REMINDER**

*Matthew 6:13b For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.*

Again, we must be reminding ourselves and submitting to the complete authority of God. Grant that many biblical scholars believe that this portion was added in the later years.

Let's sum up the format that Jesus teaches about how to pray:

**Adoration** – Praise and worship the Lord our God

**Confession** – Acknowledge our sins before our God

**Thanksgiving** – Thank Him for what He is doing in our lives

**Supplication** – Make our requests known to Him

## **G. EMPHASIZING FORGIVENESS AGAIN**

*Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

Here Jesus reemphasizes the all important attitude of forgiving others if we hope to be forgiven by the Lord. Two factors are necessary to make this transaction: first, the bedrock of God's grace to us, and second, the transfer of that same grace to others. Forgiveness essentially means providing others with the same forgiveness we receive from the Father.

## **H. PRAYER CHANGES ONE THING – ME**

Previously I said that prayer itself changes nothing. Actually, there is one thing that gets changed if it was done earnestly. It is our heart. When you and I pray, we get changed. That is one of the major reasons that prayer is such a great way to fight back against anxiety and fear. The true reason for our prayer is to align our hearts with God's hearts, so that we may do His will, not ours.

When people tell me, "All I can do is to pray," I cringe. Listen, prayer is not the least thing we can do for someone or ourselves when we are in tight corners. It is the foremost important thing for us to do.

## **I. UNBELIEVERS PRAY IN VAIN**

A great pastor and author of yesteryear, Donald Barnhouse often closed his church services with this prayer, "Lord, dismiss us with Your peace, except for those who don't know You; keep them miserable until they come to know the Prince of Peace."

The Father listens to our prayers because our relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. In other words, when an unbeliever who doesn't have that Father and son relationship prays, the Father in heaven does not listen to his prayer with the exception of one kind of prayer. That is the sinner's prayer. But when an unbeliever comes to Him to receive Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord, the Father is all ears.

## **J. APPLICATIONS**

**1) God's kingdom in our lives should be our foremost concern.**

We cannot say, "Your kingdom come," until we let our own selfish kingdom go.

**2) It is Jesus who prompts us to pray.**

His promises prompt me to pray; His examples insight me to pray;

His warnings urge me to pray; His glory stirs me to pray.

**3) Prayer should not be done to impress those around us, but plea to our God.**

We should not have that kind of carnal mind set. But with remembering His faithfulness and love for us, let's go to the throne of Grace with a simple confidence in Jesus.

**4) Forgiveness of others is not an option for Christians. It is mandatory.**

Forgive others only as much as we want to be forgiven by the Lord.