

Giving, Prayer and Fasting

By Doug Hamilton

B) Prayer (Part II)

In Matthew chapter 6:5-15 Jesus dealt with three items of prayer: 1) The Problems of Prayer, 2) The Pattern of Prayer and 3) The Precaution of Prayer. The Problems of Prayer, which are praying to impress men and praying to impress God. They are rectified by spending time alone with God and understanding He know what we have need of before we ask Him. The Pattern of Prayer covers four items a) the preparation, the program, the provision and the purpose. At the close of the first lesson we covered the preparation of prayer, “*Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.*” We must put God in the proper perspective from the very beginning. Now is time to cover the rest of the Pattern of Prayer and also the great Precaution of Prayer.

b) The Program

Continuing the pattern, Jesus said, “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*” Do you want to know what the program of God is? The program is His kingdom and His will. It is important to note that when Jesus said in the pattern, “*Thy kingdom come...*” that the kingdom had not yet come. In fact, prior to the establishment of the church on Pentecost in Acts 2, the NT reference to the kingdom was yet to come.

John the Baptist taught this concerning the kingdom.

- Matthew 3:1-2, “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ² ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Jesus taught the kingdom was yet to come.

- Mark 1:14-15 “...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”
- Mark 9:1, “And Jesus was saying to them, ‘Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.’”
- Mark 14:25, “Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

The apostles taught the kingdom was yet to come.

- Mark 10:7, “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

The thief on the cross referred to a coming kingdom of Christ.

- Luke 23:42, “And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’”

The Embalmer of Jesus was still waiting for the kingdom of God.

- Mark 15:43, “Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.”

From there the references to the kingdom of God was concerning the church which Christ built.

- Acts 8:12, ‘But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.’

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- Acts 14:21-22, “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.””
- Acts 19:8, “And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God.”
- Acts 28:23, “When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.”

At the time of Jesus teachings concerning the kingdom, the kingdom had not yet come. The kingdom of God has come in the form of church with Christ as the head. This is the Program of the Pattern of prayer, Christ and His church. We are to be praying about the fact that we are in His kingdom. We need to be addressing the fact that God has rule in our life through Christ. We are the people of God and Christ is the head of our kingdom.

“God, thank You for including me in your kingdom. Thank you for making me part of the kingdom of priests and allowing royal blood to flow through my veins. Thank you for delivering me from the lost world of the devil into the kingdom of light. As Joshua said, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*”. As John the Baptist said, *He must increase, I must decrease*. You are my King and I am in Your church and Your kingdom.

c) The Provision

“*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.*” Only after addressing the preparation and program of prayer do we finally come to our personal needs. The Provision of Prayer is divided into three categories, 1) Physical Needs, 2) Spiritual Needs, and 3) Emotional Needs. Let us cover each.

1) Physical Needs: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Daily” reminds us of what increments we are to pray concerning our needs. This is concerning all of our physical needs, including health, shelter, clothing, medicine and food. This is one that can be difficult to understand because we live in a country where we have been abundantly blessed. Many of us have a couple of months of daily bread in the bank and in the deep freeze.

We are not only supposed to pray for daily bread we don’t have, but if we already have it, then we must offer thanks for thus. We must be thankful for the physical needs already being met.

“*Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done; Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.*”

2) Spiritual Needs: “*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*”

Man’s greatest spiritual need is forgiveness. Without it, we might as well stop praying, for there is no hope for the future. Without forgiveness, we are contaminated with sin and God will not have fellowship with us.

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The word for forgiveness that is used here is that of indebtedness, referring to the charges or debts that walking Christians are perpetually being relieved from. What we find in the passage of the Lord's Prayer is a contingency on this type of forgiveness, which is being forgiving of others. If we are not going to be forgiving of someone else's sin debt, then do not expect to be forgiven of our debts from God the Father.

“Lord, please help me to be forgiving to others as I want to be forgiven of You. Help me not to be a grudge holder, but a forgiving soul. Thank You for the forgiveness which you have given me through Christ and help me to walk in that forgiveness”

3) Emotional Need: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*

This is an emotional need because after one gains forgiveness through Christ, he needs the emotional stability of knowing there is divine protection to guard against re-occurrence. We need to be praying to God on a daily basis for His guidance to be delivered from difficult situations which will come our way.

“Father, please keep me from a moment of trial. Help me to not fall for the wiles of the devil. Build a hedge of protection around me and help me to be sober and vigilant. Help me to be prepared for what I am going to face today.”

d) The Purpose

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen”

Entering the last part of the pattern of prayer, we close with the purpose. This is a phrase is called a doxology which is from the word *doxologia*. It refers to an outburst of glorious praise when the realization of the goodness of God is so great, so magnified in your heart, that you cannot contain it inside anymore. They always contain the elements of glory, eternity and the powerful word Amen.

The New Testament is filled with doxologies. Sometimes the apostle Paul would be talking about the greatness of God and what he might have said about the Father sounded so good to him that he would have to Amen it himself.

- Romans 16:27, “to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”
- Philippians 4:20, “Now to our God and Father {be} the glory forever and ever. Amen.”
- Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,²¹ to Him {be} the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”
- 1 Timothy 1:17, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, {be} honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”
- 1 Timothy 6:15-16, “...He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords;¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him {be} honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”
- 2 Timothy 4:18, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him {be} the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

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I am emphasizing the nature of the doxology because Jesus was doing the same concerning the pattern of prayer. The ultimate nature of prayer is to bring us to the maximum level of praise to the Father.

The word “For” is the first word of the phrase that connects whatever was before to what is following after. In other words, the purpose or reason we are to say Our Father, the reason we are to locate Him in heaven, the reason we are to hallow His name, the reason we are to align with His Kingdom, the reason we are to only do His will, the reason we are to seek daily bread, the reason we are to seek forgiveness of sins, the reason we are to seek divine protection is for “THINE”. “Thine?” That’s where we started isn’t it? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be “THY” name. Prayer starts with God and ends with God. “Well what about me?” There’s a place for us in the prayer, as long as we tied into His program. It’s all for His kingdom, and His power, and His glory, forever.

It is also about His glory, not ours. We can pray to the Father because He is glorious. Our glory is fleeting, but His is steadfast. We can pray to the Father knowing that our glory is small, but His is great. We can pray to the Father knowing that our glory is ascribed, but His is intrinsic. His glory cannot be separated from Him. The reason for our very existence is to glorify Him. 1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God”.

3) The Precaution of Prayer

Matthew 6:14-15 “For if ye forgive men of their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you”

It’s quite simple. Many of our prayers will never be answered because we hold a grudge against another. God is not going to acknowledge our prayer until we are forgiving to each other. It was important enough for Jesus to single it out. He knows us all too well, doesn’t He?

Closing Story: True Forgiveness

A frail black woman rose slowly to her feet in a South African courtroom. She was 70-something, the years deeply etched on her face. Facing her from across the room were several white police officers. One, a Mr. Van der Broek, had just been found guilty of murdering the woman's son and her husband. The man had come to the woman's home a number of years earlier. He had taken her son, shot him at pointblank range, and then burned his body while he and some other officers reveled in the act.

Several years later, Van der Broek had returned to take away her husband as well. For two years, she did not know what happened to him. Then, Van der Broek came back for the woman herself. She was led to a place beside a river. There, she saw her husband bound and beaten, lying on a pile of wood. The last words she heard from his lips as the officers poured gasoline over his body and set him aflame were, "Father, forgive them."

Not long after justice caught up with Mr. Van der Broek. He had been found guilty, and it was time to determine his sentence. And as the woman stood, the presiding official of the court

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asked, "So, what do you want? How should justice be done to this man who has so brutally destroyed your family?" In reply, the woman said, "I want three things. I want first to be taken to the place where my husband's body was burned so that I can gather up the dust and give his remains a decent burial." She pauses, then continues. "My husband and son were my only family.

I want, secondly, therefore, for Mr. Van der Broek to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining within me."

"And, finally," she says, "I want a third thing. I would like Mr. Van der Broek to know that I offer him my forgiveness because Jesus Christ died to forgive. This was also the wish of my husband. And so, I would kindly ask someone to come to my side and lead me across the courtroom so that I can take Mr. Van der Broek in my arms, embrace him and let him know that he is truly forgiven."

As the court assistants led the elderly woman across the courtroom, Mr. Van der Broek, overwhelmed by what he heard, fainted. Then quietly, from those in the courtroom, friends, family, and neighbors – all victims of similar oppression and injustice – began to sing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. 'Twas blind, but now I see.

Application:

So what are we to do with the Lord's Prayer as we have studied? We need to pray! It's as simple as that, we need to pray. We need to pray from this divine perspective so that we can grow closer to the Lord day by day. Avoid the problems of prayer, follow the pattern of prayer and heed the precaution of prayer.