

PP The King and His Kingdom-The Commands for a Disciple of Christ
Part 22-Matthew 6:9-15 **7/15-16/2017**

Illus In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying. In fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. The villagers reached these “prayer rooms” by using their own private footpaths through the brush. When grass began to grow over one of these trails, it was evident that the person to whom it belonged was not praying very much. Because these new Christians were concerned for each other’s spiritual welfare, a unique custom sprang up. Whenever anyone noticed an overgrown “Prayer path,” he or she would go to the person and lovingly warn, “Friend, there’s grass on your path!” - RWD¹

What a value to have a friend who tell us if they see grass on our paths
 The prayer that Jesus taught us is not a formula, but rather an invitation to meet with our Father
 It lifts the weary eyes of our hearts to the heights of His glory and great love for us

PP (Just the Scripture) Being able to pray to **‘Our Father’** is a powerful and freeing reality
 We are the adopted children of God and as J.I. Packer wrote: *‘If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father.’*²

The New Testament gives two yardsticks to measure the love of God

PP One is the death of Christ on the cross, and the other is our adoption in God’s family
 Our Father always desires the company of His children, is always accessible to His children,
 always giving all of His undivided attention to each of His children
 Being our Heavenly Father, makes us His heirs, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ
 And to guarantee this, the Holy Spirit has been given as the down payment or Divine deposit
 So we can pray with confident, bragging praise that our Dad is Magnificent
 But unlike the book of that title, where the son tells tall tales of his dad to his friend Alex, our
 Father truly exceeds any tales we can tell

PP He is **‘Our Father in heaven’**, and that does a wonderful thing to our focus in prayer
 It turns our eyes upward, to our transcendent God, Who powerfully reigns over all our problems
 There is no god or power or authority exists that is over our God
 He inhabits the very center of all there is and the throne seat of all authority
 But that word heaven also turns our eyes inward to our own humility and transparency
 Our Father Who loves us, also *sees* everything we do, think and say, and He sees our motives
 I cannot make myself appear better to Him or hide what is really in my heart to God
 The truth that He is our loving Father who sees all, drives us to voluntarily truthfulness
‘Our Father in heaven’ does even more: it sets our gaze forward knowing the eternal rest that is
 coming, so we give everything to serving Him now

Illus Florence Chadwick in 1952 stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She’d already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. But the weather was foggy and chilly and she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for 15 hours. When she begged to

¹ Our Daily Bread, 11/18, 1996

² J.I. Packer, Knowing God, p. 201

be taken out of the water along the way, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Yet finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was visible and less than a half a mile away. At a news conference the next day she said, *"All I could see was the fog...I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."*³

The Holy Spirit will persuade the praying saint that the shore is not far off, and to endure in trust, endowing us with an eternal perspective

PP C.S. Lewis once said that *"If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next... Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither."*⁴

Praying to our Father in **'heaven'** moves our eyes upward to His greatness, inward to the reality of our smallness and forward to the joy-filled eternity that lies before us

But the problem for many of us is that we are spiritual *haolis*

This is the word that Hawaiians would call people from the mainland, but it originated when the Christians arrived:

*"Before the missionaries came, my people used to sit outside their temples for a long time meditating and preparing themselves before entering. Then they would virtually creep to the altar to offer their petition and afterwards would again sit a long time outside, this time to 'breathe life' into their prayers. The Christians, when they came, just got up, uttered a few sentences, said Amen and were done. For that reason my people call them haolis, "without breath," or those who fail to breathe life into their prayers."*⁵

Is your prayer-life breathless, without life, and vitality and intimacy with God?

PP What is the cure? Jesus tells us we need to ask that **'hallowed be Your name'**

PP This means to *recognize and treat God as holy, different, other than us, distinct*

His **'name'** is holy, His names reveal aspects of His being, His character, nature and personality
And there is no greater name for God than Jesus Christ, because it is in Him that we see
the clearest and fullest picture of Who He is

PP ***"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world."***

John 17:6

Martin Luther answered the question of how we hallow God's name: it is *"When both our life*

PP *and doctrine are truly Christian."*⁶

If we want to breathe life in our prayer, then we need to learn to hallow God's name

Lord, hallowed be Your name! Help me to live in such a way that *my life reveals Your greatness*

May Your reputation be increased in the world by the way I live my life!

Hallowed be Your name in my business, my financial stewardship, my friendships, in my family,
and my thought life, neighborhood, and church

PP The second request so far in this prayer is this: **'Your kingdom come'**

This is simply and gloriously to ask God to bring His reign on earth to its fullest conclusion

³ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, Introduction, p. xx. Originally from C.J. Mahaney.

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 119

⁵ Nels Ferré, *Strengthening the Spiritual Life*, p. 1

⁶ William Barclay, *the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 241

That He would turn those in sin to His mercy and enable them to trust and obey
 But this isn't only a request for the unsaved, it includes the children of God as well
 God, give us a greater understanding of kingdom living, give us a greater desire to see You
 reign?
 Bring history to its end, send back to us our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and usher in the
 fullness of Your kingdom

PP On the heels of this, He says to pray that God's *'will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'*
 This is what Luther called a *'fearful prayer'*, because it is a prayer that puts us right in the
 center of God's refining, purifying sights

Our squirming, sinful flesh consistently, powerfully seeks to do our wills rather than God's
 When we pray *'your will be done'* we are praying that God's will become our will

PP God doesn't just want obedience, He wants us *to want to* obey Him, and He works in
 us changing our desires to His desires

PP *"For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a
 burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart,
 O God, you will not despise."* Psalm 51:16-17

'Your will be done' is a prayer of active participation in God's will, not passive resignation
 This is how God's will is done in heaven:

PP *"Bless the LORD, O you His angels, you mighty ones who do His word, obeying the voice of
 His word!"* Psalm 103:20

The angels' overriding desire is to bless the Lord: to glorify, honor, and bestow on Him
 their favor

Out of that desire, these mighty ones do, obey, fulfill God's Word, His will
 This is what we are asking God for in this prayer

How can our hearts, our desires align with right, obedient behavior?

Every parent wants to know this, for we all want our children to obey not because of
 consequences but because they honor and love us and want to

PP Heart obedience comes as we ask God to *'Give us this day our daily bread'*

God wants us to obey His will and do the work of His kingdom and He provides all we
 need in order to do it

The fact that we have to ask for it tells us we can't provide it for ourselves

We cannot provide ourselves with spiritual nourishment

There is no generic equivalent, no substitute, no knock-off brand, no other source

It is not only a request that God would provide for me, it is a commitment to be part of
 how He answers that same request for others in need

Jesus is showing us that God's blessings are to be asked for, daily, and when received, shared
 But what is this bread?

PP It is the physical sustenance that we need to live including the necessities in life that enable
 us to live in God's will

PP But this daily bread is also-in the opinion of Augustine- *'spiritual food, namely, the
 divine precepts which we are to think over and to put into practice each day'*⁷

In praying for daily bread, we are asking that God would fulfill all that we need so we can best
 follow His will

⁷ William Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 79

PP Nowhere is the need for this bread greater than this next petition: *“and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

This isn't a salvation prayer, for the Lord's prayer can only be meaningfully prayed by believers. It's a prayer that God cancels our debts, sins that we Christians commit as we live life.

‘Forgive us our debts’ is confession, and *‘He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’* **1 John 1:9**

But notice that Jesus teaches us to pray that God would forgive us in the same way we forgive others which is why Augustine said this is *‘the terrible petition’*

PP It's why Spurgeon wrote *‘Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer.’*

It is foolish to confess sins and ask God to cleanse us from unrighteousness if we refuse to forgive the debt others have incurred with us.

If we will not forgive others, if we hold onto our grudges and bar them from our grace and fellowship, then we will be barred from the sweet fellowship of our Father.

A proof of our adoption as God's children is the glad willingness to give the same grace and mercy to others that we have received in such large quantities from our Father.

Daily bread is needed as we ask *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

An important part of prayer is asking our heavenly Father for the strength to resist the pull of sin.

We are to ask for protection from our enemy who roars like a lion, seeking to devour us.

PP The Greek word for *‘temptation’* can either mean *a difficult trial, or a solicitation to do evil*. God is holy and will never, can never, solicit us to do evil.

He allows and sometimes sends tests to prove our faith genuine.

He wants us to succeed through the trial, while Satan seduces us to evil, in order to prove our faith weak and false.

God helps us by delivering us, which means more than to rescue or save someone.

PP It means to draw to oneself.

Ironically, the name Satan means *one who separates*, and God's rescuing takes the form of strengthening our relationship with Him.

God draws us away from Satan and to His side where we are safe and secure.

PP *“I used to think the Lord's Prayer was a short prayer; but, as I live longer, and see more of life, I believe there is no such thing as getting through it. If a man, in praying that prayer, were to be stopped by every word until he had thoroughly prayed it, it would take him a lifetime.”*⁸ Henry Ward Beecher

Let's stand and say this prayer together.

PP *“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’”* **Matthew 6:9-15**

Close in prayer

⁸ Henry Ward Beecher, *Christian Reader*, Vol. 34