

PP Re-View *Becoming a People of Prayer* series, part 15

11/9/2008

This is the final sermon in the *Becoming a people of prayer* series
I have tried to capture the highlights of the series for a brief look back
If you are inclined to do so, all the sermons and all my notes are on our website

You remember those African converts who each had their own special place outside the village where they would go to pray in solitude? The ways to those places were special 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. These new Christians, out of concern for one another, when noticing overgrown paths would go to that person and lovingly warn, “Friend, there’s grass on your path!”

So let me ask, is there still grass on your path?

We struggle in prayer, and when we do we lose the sense of beauty and majesty and wonder of God

Prayer begins this recovery process, by lifting our eyes back onto the heights of God’s glory and centering us on the God Who cares for us with tenderness and concern and power

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones once said that “*man is never greater than when he is there in communion and contact with God*”

PP There is power in a little pronoun called ‘Our’, the first word of this prayer

PP “*You cannot pray the Lord’s prayer and even once say ‘I’*

You cannot say the Lord’s prayer and even once say ‘my’

Nor can you pray the Lord’s prayer and not pray for another,

For when you ask for daily bread you must include your brother.

For others are included in each and every plea—

From the beginning to the end of it, it never once says ‘me’!”

If God is our Father, then that makes us brothers and sisters, united in Biblical fellowship

Have you spent more time praying for others? Encouraging others to pray? Teaching others how to pray?

This is part of what makes us a redemptive community, a family of God, children of our Heavenly Father

PP What does that mean that God is our ***Father***?

Understanding this is *freeing*!

God’s finger is not poised over some cosmic smite button, ready to inflict suffering on

His children the moment they step out of line

Yes, God disciplines His children, but love is the motivator, not vindictive wrath

PP 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.*’

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

One is the death of Christ on the cross and it is the one which grabs most of our attention

The other, though lesser known, is adoption

Our Father always desires the company of His children, is always accessible to His children, never too preoccupied to listen to His children

We are God’s heirs, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ

And the Holy Spirit is the down payment or Divine deposit, that guarantees us of our

inheritance

We can cry out in 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 exceeds any tales we can tell

PP He is our Father in heaven, and that does a wonder thing to our vision

It turns our eyes upward, to our transcendent God, Who is great and mighty and infinite

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

There can be no charade in my prayers

I cannot make myself appear better 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 eyes are drawn forward by knowing our Father presides in heaven

Illus Do you remember Florence Chadwick, who 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. The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for 15 hours. When she begged to 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. 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 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."

To pray to our Father in heaven is to move our eyes to 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."*

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."

Is your prayer-life oxygen deprived? Without breath?

PP What is the cure? Jesus tells us we need to ask that God's name would be hallowed

Do you remember what it means to hallow God's name?

PP It means to *recognize and treat God as holy*

His name is holy, which is tremendously significant!
God's 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 God 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 and doctrine are truly Christian."*

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 Jesus taught us to ask is that God's kingdom would come

Meaning to ask God to bring His reign on earth to its fullest conclusion

Turn those in sin to Your 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?

God, bring history to its end, send back to us our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and
usher in the fullness of Your kingdom

PP So we are to pray that God's will would 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, sin-saddled flesh consistently, and 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

This 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!"* **Psalms 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

PP How can this happen? By asking God to provide us with 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 it 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

The words 'us' and 'our' make clear that this is bread for God's communities

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, and when received, shared

It's daily bread, made fresh each and every day and given to God's children

But what is this bread?

PP It is the physical sustenance that we need to live-both food and those 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'*

In praying for daily bread we are asking that God would fulfill all our needs-physical, life's necessities and spiritual-so that we can best follow His will

PP Nowhere is the need for this greater than forgiving those who sin against us: ***"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."***

An unforgiving spirit is one of most common short circuits of grace

It is one of the biggest threats to God's communities

We learned that asking God to forgive us our debts, isn't a prayer for salvation

For the Lord's prayer is a prayer that only a believer can meaningfully pray, it is for one who has already received God's pardon sin

Debts are the continuing sins that all believers continue to commit

We see this when Jesus bent down to clean Peter's dirty feet in that upper room

Although Peter's body was clean-he was justified by faith-he walked in this world and was dirtied by sin

'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 shockingly, Jesus guides 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

The 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

PP Temptation comes in all shapes and sizes

An important part of prayer is asking our heavenly Father for help to resist it

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

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

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 Finally, last week we looked at the doxology and saw that we need to learn to live the
Amen of Scripture

We praise God for His sovereignty, His explosive power to bring about His will, and His
glory and fame that comes when He displays Himself

We give God that glory when we live out the Amen of Scripture

The word 'Amen' means *it is so*

It is the affirmation that all the promises of God have been fulfilled in Christ

Therefore we can pray the truths and principles found in this prayer with faith-filled
confidence, because we know that all the promises of God are already ours

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."*