

**"PETITIONING OUR KING"
MATTHEW 6:9-13**

THE GCBA PRAYER EMPHASIS 2010

INTRODUCTION TO “PETITIONING OUR KING”

Something happened in my neighborhood in early January. You would think something so ordinary would not seem unusual. But it was quite notable. A foundation was laid for a new house. This has not happened in several years. Circumstances like a hurricane, economic crisis, insurance rates, job loss, and who knows what else, all contributed to keep people away from new construction.

In Revelation 2, Jesus noted a problem with the church at Ephesus. They were not bad. In fact, they were doing some pretty incredible things. But they had “left their first love,” He said.

It happens to the best of us sometimes. A crisis takes the legs out from under us, and we get off track. We don’t mean for it to, but it does. Maybe it wasn’t a big thing but a series of smaller things that combined to rob us of our focus.

I asked seven of our pastors to write briefly on a different phrase of the “The Lord’s Prayer” around the overall theme of “Petitioning Our King.” The intent is to help you refocus on, and reconnect with, your Heavenly Father, the King of Kings, in a real and personal way

Jesus gave this as a model for His disciples to aid them in their prayer. It is not meant as a mantra to be repeated, as though the repetition alone produces some devout spirituality. In reality, the mere act of repeating the verses over and over has no more affect on spiritual development than writing “I will not disrupt class” 500 times on the chalkboard keeps 5th graders from future misbehavior.

This model prayer (should it more appropriately be called “The Disciples Prayer?”) is a guide for those who are tired of the status quo, who so hunger and thirst for God that they crave something beyond mundane spirituality. If this describes you, then this focused time on “The Disciple’s Prayer” is for you.

Such a spiritual existence should be the norm rather than the exception. I should not have been surprised to see workman laying a foundation, but I was. I pray that you will begin anew to lay a foundation of prayer through a rekindled love for your Heavenly Father and that prayer will provide a firm foundation for all He wants you to be and do.

The following may be used in any manner you choose. Use it for the basis for Wednesday evening study, or for Small Group or Cottage prayer emphasis. Each of the sections has additional verses which may be used for daily prayer times. Use this however it fits your needs.

Blessings,

Dr. Steve Mooneyham
Executive Director
Gulf Coast Baptist Association

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“The Person of the King” Matthew 6:9
Dr. Randy Rich, Pastor, Diamondhead Baptist Church

⁹“After this manner therefore pray ye, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”¹

A major portion of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is dedicated to worship. From the Beatitudes that describe the character of a believer to the witness of believers in being salt and light, Jesus transitions into acts of worship. Matthew 6 is divided into three “strophes” or verses dealing with ways to honor God. The third is fasting, a deeply personal act of dedication that prepares the believer for the other two. The first is almsgiving, an outward expression of worship and God’s plan for helping the poor. The focus of this study is the second, prayer. The issue in all three is not whether or not to do them, but the motivation behind them. Jesus does not command his disciples to pray nor does he admonish them for not praying. It is assumed that they are praying and in need of clarification and instruction.² The same is true for fasting and almsgiving.

While Jesus did not reject public prayer, these instructions were given for that private and personal communication with God where motive is presented to God in its barest form. Whether prayer is said in public or in private, it is always a personal communication between a believer and God. Thus, there is need for neither noisy processions nor heaps of empty phrases.

The prayer is addressed to “*Our Father*.” The Aramaic form normally used by Jesus is analogous with “Daddy” in the most loving respectful address of a child to his or her male parent. Father makes the prayer personal. Luke leaves it at that, but Matthew sees the prayer in a more corporate context. Even praying individually, the way we look at others is conditioned by the fact that others love and are loved by the Father. John 14:9 “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.’”³

“*In Heaven*” introduces a wonderful paradox that is a regular theme throughout Scripture. God is transcendent and totally other than us, yet, God is also near. He is in heaven and He is our Father. Frank Stagg said, “To deism, God is distant and out of reach; to pantheism, God is everything and everything is God; to the sentimentalist, God may be ‘the man upstairs.’ To Jesus, God is none of this. He is Father and He is God, ever near and ever to be held in reverence.”⁴ Another working assumption in Scripture is the existence of God. It is never a question. The very first phrase of Scripture says, “In the beginning God...” Edgar Arendall says that two things are sure: 1. God exists, and 2. God watches how we react to Him.⁵

“*Hallowed*” is a word that is not in common use, but for believers, should be the spiritual muscle tissue of our hearts at all times. Arendall continues, “Have we found the holy ground; this

¹King James Version, here and in subsequent headings as well

² Eugene Boring *Matthew The New Interpreters Bible* vol 8, Leander Keck, editor (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995) p. 206.

³*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1996, c1989 (Jn 14:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Frank Stagg *Matthew The Broadman Bible Commentary* vol. 8, Clifton Allen, editor (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969) p. 115.

⁵ Edgar M. Arendall “Reverence” Sermon presented to the Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama.

‘mysterium tremendum’ that is involved in the miracle of worship? (1 John 1:1) Reverence for God. The hub of life. ‘Hallowed be thy name.’ Strange, but we can only have the nearness of Jesus Christ when we have a concept of God high and lifted up.”⁶ While the English is less than precise, the Greek word is in the imperative. We are instructed to hallow the name of God.

Frank Pollard reminds us that we don’t make Him holy; we revere Him because He is holy.⁷ Reverence for God’s holiness reminds us of our total lack of holiness. For example, in Luke 18, Jesus told the story of two men praying. “⁹ *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:* ¹⁰ *‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’”⁸*

“Name” is more than a tag of identification! Again, Pollard illuminates, “The Jews believed that the name of God contained the nature, the character, and the power of God himself...”⁹ God is a being and the root of all being. His name is majesty defined.

It is strangely amusing that Dr. Arendall, in the early 1970’s, loudly lamented, “I do not believe there has ever been a more disrespectful, egotistical, and exhibitionist generation than ours. Unless something changes, succeeding generations are going to say about us, ‘That was the generation – in the ‘70’s – when respect went down the drain.... Our world has lost its sense of sin because it has lost its sense of the holiness of God!”¹⁰ What would he think of today? Real respect has deep roots. Real respect is rooted in the reality and majesty of God. Our prayers generally begin with “Dear Heavenly Father...” and end with “In Jesus’ Name, Amen.” Are these just introductions and conclusions to prayer or are they the essence of belief? God is our heavenly father and our closeness to Him is because of the name of Jesus.”

The style of worship; the rituals of worship; even the mission activities that result from worship are affected by this. The content of our prayers becomes irrelevant if we do not hallow and celebrate God, through Jesus, and unto others. Whether we stand before a full congregation or in the privacy of our prayer closets, we are talking to God, Almighty. How we speak to God colors everything else. Everyone needs to be reminded that the Name of God is holy and never allowed to become common.

Consider this. The next time you pray or lead prayer for others. Quote the opening phrases of the Lord’s Prayer, “*Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...*” and STOP. The natural inclination will be for others to join in and continue the prayer, but stop. Let the silence overwhelm. While some may think that you have forgotten the next phrase, you will know that the Person of the King must be contemplated even before the kingdom comes.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Frank Pollard “Say Father” Broadcast on The Baptist Hour, November 2, 1984.

⁸ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1996, c1989 (Lk 18:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ Pollard *Op Cite*

¹⁰ Arendall *Op Cite*

Other passages for contemplation on The Person of the King:

Isaiah 6:1-8 (The Call of Isaiah)

1 Peter 1:3-9 (Peter's Hymn of Praise)

Romans 11:33-36 (Paul's Hymn of Praise)

Exodus 3:13-15, 20:7 (Moses and the majestic name of God)

Acts 4:12 and Philippians 2:1-11 (At the Name of Jesus)

“The Purpose of the King” Matthew 6:10a
Dr. G. Wiley Abel, Pastor, First Baptist Wiggins, MS

“Thy kingdom come”

We trip over the word kingdom. We immediately think in terms of geography. We ask questions like “Where?” and “When?” The kingdom transcends space and time. When asked if He were a king, Jesus did not reject the title, but immediately posited a disclaimer. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said.

What did Jesus mean by “my kingdom” and “thy kingdom”?

The idea of the kingdom was a very familiar and important concept for the Jewish people. It was an essential part of their prayer life. “May His kingdom be established in your lifetime” was a common benediction among the Jews. A prayer which did not mention the kingdom was not considered prayer at all (Fisher, p 115).

From early times Israel thought of God as their Sovereign Ruler. There was a time for Israel when there was no king but God. When the Jewish people spoke of the kingdom they were referring to God ruling. After Israel had settled in the Promised Land, they became influenced by surrounding nations. 1 Samuel 8:4-8 tells how a delegation went to Samuel and asked that he appoint a king to rule over them so that they could be like other nations. Samuel, the last of the Judges, was hurt by the request for he felt personally rejected by the people’s request. God spoke to Samuel and told him, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (1 Samuel 8:7).

Just how far Israel continued to drift from the concept of the kingdom as God’s rule is shown in the trial of Jesus before Pilate. Having failed to get Pilate’s attention by accusing Jesus of blasphemy, the Jews reported that Jesus claimed to be a king. Blasphemy was a religious charge that did not concern Pilate. The claim to be king was a political charge that Pilate could not ignore without the possibility of personal consequences. Presenting Jesus to the crowd, Pilate said, “Behold your king.” The Jewish antagonists responded by saying, “We have no king but Caesar!” The Jews had come a long way, from no king but God to no king but Caesar. It was a downward journey.

The kingdom has come in Jesus.

Jesus took up the very familiar Jewish idea of God as king and made it central in His preaching. According to Mark’s Gospel, Jesus began his public ministry by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel” (See Mark 1:14-15).

Jesus spoke of “my kingdom,” “thy kingdom,” “the kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven.” These are all one and the same. When Jesus prayed “thy kingdom come,” He was not praying for something other than or different from what He himself had come to establish. His whole life was committed to the kingdom. The will of the Father was his life. Jesus was

consumed by the kingdom of the Father. According to John's Gospel, when Jesus cleansed the temple the disciples remembered the Scripture concerning the Messiah that said, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17). Jesus was consumed by God's will and purpose. Few of us will ever experience the zeal that consumes, but this is very close to being the meaning of the kingdom. The kingdom idea in the Sermon on the Mount reflects the dynamic relationship of God with the believer. The kingdom is manifested in the world as believers daily live out their personal relationship with God.

How does one enter the kingdom?

In praying "thy kingdom come," Jesus was modeling one of the basic characteristics of being a kingdom subject. The kingdom is about surrender and commitment to the will of the Father. No one modeled this better than Jesus. "My food (meat, sustenance, nourishment)," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34 NIV). This is what the kingdom is about. It means desiring God's active participation in our lives more than anything else. That comes only by surrender. One enters the kingdom by way of submission. Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). Nicodemus questioned beginning over, starting as a babe. He was an old man who was set in his ways. He was a leader of the Jews, but if he wanted to be a part of the kingly rule of God, he had to learn submission. Being part of the kingdom means many things, but it at least means this: kingdom people desire God's will and purpose to become real in our lives in the present world.

The kingdom as already but not yet.

The next phrase in the prayer, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is one of the clearest statements about the meaning of the kingdom of God in the entire Bible. It is a commentary on "thy kingdom come." The kingdom comes when God's will is done on earth. The kingdom is present wherever there is a person truly surrendered to the will and purpose of God. To pray "thy kingdom come" is an invitation from the petitioner to God requesting that He begin to rule with authority in the heart and life of the one praying. Those who have been born again are part of the kingdom now. The kingdom is a present reality wherever God's people take seriously being salt and light or a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

The New Testament insists that in a very real way the kingdom has already arrived. It arrived in a Person and spreads through persons. But the present reality of the kingdom does not exhaust the idea of the kingdom. The kingdom is future as well as present. We wait patiently for the coming of Christ, the new heaven and the new earth and the eternal reign of God that has already begun. "Even so, come Lord."

For further reading

William Barclay, The King and the Kingdom (Wesminster Press, 1968)
John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Abingdon Press, 1953)
Fred Fisher, The Sermon on the Mount (Broadman Press, 1976)

Other passages for contemplation on The Purpose of the King:

Matthew 5 – 7: “The Sermon on the Mount” – these chapters deal with what God expects of kingdom subjects

Matthew 13: A bundle of parables about the kingdom – “think on these things”

Matthew 6:33: What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom”?

Isaiah 61:1-2: How can we continue the ministry begun by Jesus?

“The Plan of the King” Matthew 6:10b
Dr. Chris King, Pastor, Bayou View Baptist Church

“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

Explanation

This part of the prayer naturally leads to questions about God’s will and how our prayers interact with His will. Some of these questions include, “If God is sovereign and declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), then why do we need to pray that His will be done on earth?” Or, “Isn’t God in control, and isn’t everything going according to God’s sovereign plan (Ephesians 1:11)?” This prayer reflects the balance the Scripture presents regarding God’s sovereign control over all events, and the existence of worldly sin which never pleases God.

To understand this part of the Lord’s Prayer, we must first understand some things about God’s will. Since God is sovereign and rules over all, His will is done. Daniel 4:25 states, “...the Most High ***rules the kingdom of men*** and gives it to whom he will.” After being confronted by God, Job confesses, “I know that you can do all things, and that ***no purpose of yours can be thwarted*** (Job 42:2). Declaring His sovereignty through the prophet Isaiah, God says, “remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ***declaring the end from the beginning*** and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and ***I will accomplish all my purpose***,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. ***I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it*** (Isaiah 46:9-11). The Scripture makes clear that God does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3). Paul states that God ***works all things according to the counsel of his will*** (Ephesians 1:11).

While all these things are true, one must account for the reality of sin and disobedience in the world. When man sinned, all of God’s good creation was twisted and distorted. All of creation groans under the dread sway of sin (Romans 8:22). Furthermore, sin and the death of the wicked grieve God (Ezekiel 18:32). That God is sovereign does not mean that people always do what He pleases. Jesus was grieved over the people’s sin and their rejection of Him (Luke 13:34). God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30), yet most refuse to do so. God commands Christians to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16), but we often fail to do so. Therefore, because of sin, God’s good and righteous commands are not always followed.

This prayer must be understood in light of these two biblical truths (God is sovereign, yet sin and disobedience exist). This part of the prayer expresses the earnest desire of God’s people to see God obeyed on earth. The prayer calls out for God to be obeyed in our rebellious world as He is perfectly obeyed in heaven. R. C. Sproul sums this up well by writing, “In this petition, then, Jesus is affirming that the will of God is done in heaven. However, He is also affirming that it is not done here. People here on earth do not strive to glorify God. They do not seek the kingdom of God. They do not hallow the name of God. So Jesus says we ought to pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In considering these truths, we must also remember that while God is sovereign, prayer is effectual. God’s power and rule must not lead us to a gray and bitter resignation that our prayers do not matter. This type of attitude misses the important place of prayer in the Christian life. Regarding this John MacArthur writes, “Looking at God’s sovereignty in a fatalistic way, thinking ‘What will be will be,’ absolutely destroys faithful prayer and faithful obedience of every sort.” God has ordered the universe in such a way that prayer can and does effectively

change things (James 5:16-18). Furthermore, God calls us to pray in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15). Jesus desires for us to always pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). Our understanding of God's will and His sovereignty must never lead us away from persistent prayer. As Charles Spurgeon says, "Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom. If you may have everything by asking in His Name, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is."

Exhortation and Prayer Focus

First, pray with a desire to see the sin and rebellion of this world halted and undone. This prayer should lead us to be grieved by the disobedience of the world (Romans 1:18). It should also remind us to be broken by our own sin against God (Psalm 51:1-3). Like Paul, we should have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in our hearts for those who will not believe the Gospel (Romans 9:2).

Second, pray with confidence in the sovereignty of God. In this prayer we affirm that God's will is done in heaven. God has set the day of judgment (Acts 17:31), and has an eternal and unchangeable plan that will come to pass (Rev. 1:1). Pray with the confidence of the psalmist, that God does all that He pleases (Ps. 115:3). In the midst of a sinful world this gives us the hope expressed in the hymn *This is My Father's World* which says, "That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet."

Third, this prayer encourages us to do God's will (and see God's will done) despite the sin and rebellion of this world. Sin brings much pain and sorrow, but in the midst of it we have a prevailing desire to do God's will. Our desire to do our Father's will on earth is reinforced by saying this prayer. This is what Jesus was facing in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was preparing to face suffering and death at the hands of sinners, and bear God's punishment for our sins. Through prayer He prepared Himself to do God's will. This prayer reminds us we should be actively seeking and doing His will on earth (Romans 12:1-2). Amy Carmichael said, "And, shall I pray to change Thy will my Father, until it be according to mine? But no Lord, no. That shall never be, rather I pray Thee blend my human will with Thine."

Additional Scriptures to Consider

-Matthew 26:37-39

-1 John 5:14-15

-Romans 12:1-2

“The Provision of the King” Matthew 6:11
Dr. LaRue Stephens, First Baptist Church, Long Beach

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

What is the need in your life today? For what do you hunger? Are you fearful? Jesus tells us not to worry over the material needs of our life. “Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you,” (Matthew 6:31-33). Rather than worry, we are instructed to ask our heavenly Father to **“Give us this day our daily bread,”** (Matthew 6:11). He knows and desires to meet our life needs.

“Give us” directs our attention to the Giver, the Source of all we need in life. Jesus reminds us that we have a Father in heaven Who will give us adequate provisions necessary to fulfill His kingdom agenda on earth. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you,” (Matthew 7:7). We are encouraged to petition our King for the necessities of our life. We do our part by asking, seeking, and knocking. As we follow His instructions we can expect our heavenly Father to grant us adequate provisions for our needs and for the tasks at hand. We are the recipient; God is the faithful Source, the Provider of all our needs.

A young boy stood beside an older man waiting to cross the street. Noticing a bag in the boy’s hand, the man asked, “Say young man, what do you have in the bag?” The boy replied, “A loaf of bread, sir.” “Where did you get the bread?” asked the man. “From the store down the street, sir,” the boy said softly. The man followed, “Where do you suppose the store got the bread?” “From the baker?” the boy asked. “That’s right,” the man continued, “And where do you suppose the baker got the flour to make the bread?” “From the miller!” came the young man’s confident reply. “And where did the miller get the wheat to make the flour?” the man asked. The boy smiled and said “From the farmer!” “That’s right young man, but where did the farmer get the wheat to sell to the miller?” questioned the older man. The boy questioned, “From God?” “That’s right young man; now tell me, from where did you really get the bread?” the older man asked with a smile on his face. After a thoughtful pause the boy replied, “Well sir, I guess I really got this bread from God.”

Our food and strength for every day is dependent upon the care of our heavenly Father. Would you pause a few moments and spend time expressing in prayer your gratitude to God for His willingness to give you life’s daily necessities?

“This day” directs our focus to a specific time-frame. Life is not lived in tomorrow. Life is not lived in yesterday. Life is lived in today, **this day**, right now. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble,” (Matthew 6:34). The Father’s sure provision does not insure a life without problems and difficulties. We do not need to multiply our troubles today by borrowing trouble from tomorrow. The uncertainties of our life journey in **“this day”** should motivate us to call out to God today for His provisions that are absolutely necessary for the here and now of our life.

“Give us *this day* our daily bread.” Such an emphasis on **“this day”** is to acknowledge our dependence on the heavenly Father for our life’s necessities. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning,” (James 1:17).

Have you acknowledged your need for God’s provisions today? Can you name some of life’s necessities that God has provided for you this day? Take a moment and list some of this day’s provisions from your heavenly Father.

“Our daily Bread” was an ever-present and urgent need for first century workers who were paid each day for their labor. Each day they faced the relentless and routine challenge of basic survival rations. Missing a few days of work because of illness could be devastating for them; therefore, daily provision of material needs could not be taken for granted.

Jesus trusted His heavenly Father for each day’s provisions and He taught His disciples to trust their heavenly Father to provide adequately and timely for their daily needs. Emphasizing the trustworthiness of His Father, Jesus questioned His disciples, “Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11). We too can trust our heavenly Father to give us the necessities of life each day.

Do you trust God to meet your daily needs? Take a moment and write a four sentence paragraph describing how you are trusting God for your daily necessities.

Jesus has taught us to pray **“Give us this day our daily bread.”** Day by day we are privileged to petition our King for daily provisions. James reminded his audience that, “You do not have because you do not ask,” (James 4:2d). Exercise your privilege as a child of the heavenly Father. Petition the King for His daily provisions!

For additional Scripture readings demonstrating *The Provision of the King*

Exodus 15:22-27; 17:1-6, God provided for thirsty people.

Exodus 17:1-15, God provided for hungry people.

1 Kings 17:8-16, God provided for a widow and her son.

1 Kings 19:1-8, God provided for an exhausted, famished prophet.

Matthew 6:25-34, God provides for His people.

“The Pardon of the King” Matthew 6:12
Dr. Charles Ray, Pastor, Grace Memorial Baptist Church

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”

Debt in America

At the end of 2008, the average American household had over \$8,000 in credit card debt. Many of us have debt in the form of a mortgage that is far more than we will make in salary this year (or next year for that matter). We have even come up with the term “good debt,” which makes us feel better about owing huge amounts of money. Most Americans are accustomed to being in debt.

Debt as Sin

The term for debt used in the Sermon on the Mount, as is the case with our English word “debt,” does not refer merely to financial obligations. The term can also refer to moral obligations. In English we might say that we are indebted to someone for saving our life. We have a moral obligation to that person because of what they have done for us. Jesus used the imagery of our sin as a debt or an obligation that we owe to God. Our sin, which separates us from God, is a debt or obligation to be paid. One of the fundamental truths of this passage assumed by Jesus is that we are indebted to God because of our sins.

“Forgive Us Our Debts”

If we are comfortable with financial debt in America, we seem to be equally comfortable with sin debt. Since sin is such an uncomfortable topic, we gloss over sin when presenting the gospel, and instead we focus on eternal life, heaven, and the joy and blessings that flow out of the Christian life. While we certainly should not take these powerful truths for granted, one must wonder if we can really grasp the enormity of God’s grace if we don’t first grasp the enormity of the debt we owe Him because of our sin.

Forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel message, and Jesus reminded His disciples that forgiveness continues to play a part in the life of His followers. Instead of the “I’m okay, you’re okay” mentality that might pervade our culture, we must continue to preach, teach, proclaim, plead for, and accept the forgiveness that only God can give. Too often as Christians we assume that forgiveness ceased to be crucial once we became believers, but Jesus taught His disciples to continue to pray for God’s forgiveness. I wonder; when was the last time you looked at your own sins and understood the significance of the debt you owe to God? When was the last time you cried out to God for mercy and forgiveness because of your indebtedness to Him? The great grace of the gospel message teaches us that God has taken sinners who were so far in debt to Him because of their sins that there was no hope for the debt to be repaid, and God has erased their debts through the death of His son, Jesus. Father, forgive us our debts, and may we never take your forgiveness for granted.

“As We Forgive Our Debtors”

We might like to think that our prayer of forgiveness ended right there, after we experienced the joy of forgiveness ourselves, but Jesus went on to remind His disciples of the need to forgive others. Immediately after the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus made this claim, “If you forgive other people for their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if you

do not forgive other people, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14–15). Jesus’ main point is clear; those who have been forgiven by God will forgive others. God’s forgiveness and grace for us demand a forgiving spirit on our part.

While we may love to reflect on how God has forgiven us, we are often hesitant to forgive others. “But you don’t know what they did to me,” we might say. “How can I ever forgive them after what they said about me?” When we have been grievously wronged, we have a hard time imagining how we could forgive the person who wronged us. In a parable later in Matthew, Jesus reminded his disciples that those who are forgiven by God yet refuse to forgive others are hypocrites (Matt. 18:21–35). When we realize how much forgiveness God has extended to us, how He has allowed us to be his children in spite of our willful disobedience to Him, we must then understand the importance of forgiving others. Jesus taught that an unforgiving spirit reflects an unrepentant heart. If we refuse to forgive others, we show that we have not grasped the depth of God’s grace and mercy toward us.

As Americans, many of us are in debt. As human beings, we are all in debt to God because of our sinfulness. While we may talk about good financial debt, the only thing good about our spiritual debt of sin is that we serve a loving and gracious God who has provided a way for our sins to be forgiven. May we not be hypocrites who crave forgiveness from God but refuse to imitate God’s character by extending forgiveness to others. This section of the Lord’s Prayer invites us to pray in two ways. First, we are invited to cling to God’s mercy by receiving forgiveness for our own sins. Spend time this week confessing your own sinfulness, perhaps remorsefully and tearfully, but also with the joy that comes in finding forgiveness from God. Second, pray that you would have the mercy to forgive others in the same way that God has forgiven you. May we not have unforgiving spirits that are reflections of our unrepentant hearts.

Other Passages for Reflection

- **1 John 1:5-10-** Confess to God your own sinfulness, and cling to His faithfulness and justice as He forgives you of your sins and cleanses you from all unrighteousness
- **Psalms 103-** Thank God for His grace and mercy and for His willingness to extend forgiveness to sinful human beings
- **Psalms 19-** Ask God to forgive you of those sins that still lurk in your heart and threaten to control you
- **Colossians 2:11-15-** Celebrate the fact that God has cancelled your debts and made you alive in Christ Jesus
- **Matthew 18:21-35-** Pray that God would give you a forgiving spirit that is a reflection of His very nature

“The Protection of the King” Matthew 6:13a
Dr. Bill Warren, Pastor, Jacob’s Well

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

Introduction

As Jesus taught His disciples about how to pray, He was countering two tendencies. The first was turning private prayer into a public spectacle that was done more to show off than to deepen one’s relationship with God. The second tendency was to use prayer as a way of manipulating God so as to get an answer from a reluctant God. What we commonly call “The Lord’s Prayer” is a great corrective to these two relationship problems that also affect prayer. After starting with a reminder about the one to whom we are praying “Our Father, who is in heaven,” Jesus centers on our commitment to the relationship by emphasizing that the heart-desire is to see honor brought to our Father’s reputation, to see His influence extended, and to see His will being done. Our needs are then presented, including the deepest need of keeping the relationship solid through forgiveness, a facet that cannot be separated from our relationships with other people. After this, the prayer calls us to ask for God’s help in the midst of life in a world that severely tests our faithfulness to God through the following phrase: “and may you not lead us into testings (temptations), but do deliver us from evil.” This is the phrase that we now want to focus upon.

Exegesis and Application of Matthew 6:13

In thinking about the phrase “do not lead us into temptation,” two facets need further definition. First, the phrase “do not lead us” could also be translated as “do not begin leading us” in the sense of speaking about the potential of being led into a time of testing rather than a reality. The verb tense used is not an imperative or command, so the emphasis is that the action not start to take place (as noted above, *do not begin leading us*), not on an action being continued. Second, the word “temptation” means “testing,” with the result of the test indicating whether it was a test that was passed by faithfulness or a test that was failed due to unfaithfulness. Of course, the failed test is a temptation, but in this passage, the verdict is not yet known, so “testing” is a better way of translating the word here. The overall emphasis, then, is a request that God not let us go into a situation where we might fail Him due to our unfaithfulness in the midst of the test. The principle is somewhat paralleled in the statement by Mother Teresa, “I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.” We pray that God would not have too much confidence in us because we want to be faithful to Him more than anything and not fail due to the severity of the testing.

The second part of this verse, “but deliver us from evil,” is in the imperative, or command mode. The phrase can be taken as a reference to evil in a broad sense or to “the evil one” in the sense of Satan. The best way of understanding what Jesus is saying would seem to be to see the phrase as more inclusive rather than highly restricted. In this sense, Jesus is highlighting the petition that God deliver us from evil in all of its forms. By way of application, the prayer can be understood as seeking God’s deliverance from evil in a general sense, from evil in a specific sense, from evil people, from evil in our settings, and from evil even within us. When we are tested, the prayer is that God would not test us beyond our ability to remain faithful

to Him, and that He would deliver us from the evil that is both found in the testing and in life overall.

A Prayer Focus based on Matthew 6:13

As for a prayer focus, for private prayer a slow reading and meditation on the Lord's Prayer is a powerful way of allowing God to teach us about prayer and to focus on what is most important about prayer. Since the most important aspect of prayer is the One to Whom we pray, the Lord God Almighty, we begin by remembering to Whom we are praying. Next, we commit to being in line with what God desires for this world. Then we shift to our needs, our relationships, and our faithfulness. In praying based on Matthew 6:13, we center most on our desire to be faithful to our Lord and not to be overcome by evil in any form in which it might present itself. In corporate worship, a suggestion would be to highlight the central role of faithfulness as our primary desire with reference to our daily walk with God, then, relate that to this verse. Next, have folks write down their own pledge of faithfulness to God, note the circumstances in which they most struggle to remain faithful, and then invite them to pray an adaptation of this verse with specific reference to their areas of struggle in being faithful to God.

Additional suggested devotional readings

A number of other passages relate to the same emphasis of this part of the Lord's Prayer. Here are a few suggestions:

God and testings/temptations:

1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Tim. 6:9; James 1:2-3, 12-18; 1 Pet. 4:12-13

God's deliverance from evil:

Ps 6:4; Ps 34:4; Ps 34:19; Ps 97:10; Ps 107:6; Col. 1:13; 2 Pet. 2:7-9

“The Power of the King” Matthew 6:13b
Dr. Argile Smith, Pastor, FBC Biloxi

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

Bret and Kenny got into a fight on the school playground. Both fourth-graders, Kenny had the upper hand from the start because he weighed about fifteen pounds more than his opponent. In a few moments, he had Bret pinned to the ground. Just before the teacher on playground duty arrived on the scene to break up the fight, Kenny made Bret an offer that would end the fracas. Kenny articulated his offer in a manner typical of fourth-grade boys in battle. He demanded, “Say *uncle!*” With his demand, Kenny set forth the terms of Bret’s surrender. By uttering the *uncle* word, Bret would have acknowledged that Kenny had won the fight.

On September 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, representatives of the defeated Empire of Japan boarded the USS Missouri in order to do something that formally ended World War II. In a simple but elegant ceremony led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Allied forces commander in charge, they signed a document in which the terms of Japan’s surrender had been articulated. By signing the document, they acknowledged that they accepted the terms of surrender.

At the conclusion of Jesus’ model prayer, a most curious statement catches our attention. It’s a statement that can be interpreted best as the terms of our surrender to the Lord. At times, believers utter such a statement because our wholehearted love for Christ prompts us to acknowledge joyfully and willingly our surrender to Him. At other times, however, we whisper such words of unconditional surrender only after a long and vicious fight for control. In a way, though, that kind of struggle forms the essence of real-time prayer. When we pray, we often find ourselves struggling with the Lord over who gets the final word in our lives. If our time in prayer has been spent well, the struggle ends with us giving up the fight and surrendering to Him.

In Matthew 6:13, the terms of our surrender to Christ have been stated clearly for us. These same terms have been given to us in other passages of Scripture as well. Agreeing to the terms of surrender enables us to translate our time in prayer into lifestyles that please Him. When we pray with a heart of surrender to Christ, we acknowledge that the kingdom belongs to Him, the power belongs to Him, and the glory belongs to Him.

When we say that the kingdom belongs to the Lord, we acknowledge His authority to do what He wants. Surrendering the control of our lives to Him, we affirm that we have given up on our dreams of building little kingdoms for ourselves. No longer willing to take selfish ownership of our destinies, our resources, our relationships, our anything else used to build personal kingdoms, we submit to Him and say to Him without reservation that He’s in charge. Stated simply, the kingdom belongs to Him, not to us.

Acknowledging this term of surrender helps us to focus our attention on the Kingdom work of carrying out the Great Commission. When we surrender to His authority, we determine that His kingdom priority of sharing His good news with all people everywhere matters more to us than anything else.

When we say that the power belongs to the Lord, we verify His ability to do whatever He wants. Resting assured in the fact that He has the power to carry out the work of His kingdom, we find ourselves at peace in the reality that carrying out His plan for us each day doesn’t ultimately depend on us. Powerless in ourselves, we can’t bring anything to the table that would guarantee that the Lord’s work will be done. For that reason, we rest in complete confidence that He will empower us to do the Kingdom work to which He has assigned us.

This term of surrender relieves us of the responsibility for coming up with what we need in order to serve Him. We learn to take Him seriously when He tells us to turn to Him for anything we need as we carry out the work He has assigned us (John 15:16). We can count on Him to give us what we cannot give ourselves.

When we say that the glory belongs to the Lord, we affirm His ambition to uphold His good name. We know that if we try to promote our good name, nothing of eternal value will happen in people's lives. By contrast, if we devote ourselves to taking up the name of Jesus Christ, people will have an opportunity to experience the kind of eternal change that only He can make. For that reason, we surrender our interest in building up ourselves. Instead, we give attention to glorifying Him. After all, He alone deserves all the glory because He alone provides the gift of salvation that can transform a person who's an enemy of the King into a citizen of His kingdom.

This term of surrender helps us to remain focused on the reason for our devotion to Him. The more we promote His good name among people, the more we will see them being drawn to Him. In turn, the more we will see lives transformed through Him.

Don't overlook the final words of the curious statement at the end of Jesus' model prayer. The terms of our surrender to the Lord do not have a time limit. We can't satisfy ourselves in the notion that we'll abide by His terms until we get tired of them or until we discover a better way. We acknowledge His kingdom, power, and glory *forever*. And forever includes today.

So be it! That's what we mean when we say *Amen*. In light of the meaning of the term, what do you say as you reflect on the terms of our surrender to Him? Amen? Let me think about it? Yes, but not exclusively?

Or do you say to the Lord, "You win. I surrender. I accept your terms. So be it. Amen."

For Further Study

Psalm 19

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Job 42:1-6

Matthew 26:39

Ephesians 3:14-21

1 Peter 5:4-11

Revelation 21:1-4