

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Pattern For Prayer, Part II

Matthew 6:7-15

⁷But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. ¹⁴For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matt. 6:7-15 (KJV)

The Lord's Prayer can be divided into two parts or two tables. The first table has to do with the glory of God and the second table relates to our human need.

As I mentioned last time, we properly begin all prayer with a reverent appreciation for the Name of God. We approach God as our Heavenly Father who's Name is to be hallowed and glorified. We are to pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the first table of the Lord's Prayer. The second Table begins...

I. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

A mother of Livingston, Texas tells this story. My four-year-old was standing on a kitchen chair pulled close to the wall, intensely staring at the familiar "Our Daily Bread" painting of the older man praying over a small loaf.

"What are you doing, Honey?" I asked.

"Looking," she said with a catch in her voice.

Noticing tears under her dark lashes, I probed deeper. "What are you thinking?"

With a heartfelt sigh, she replied, "He doesn't have any peanut butter." -- H.J. Duffy, Livingston, Texas. Christian Reader, "Kids of the Kingdom."

This petition to pray for our daily bread at once recognizes God as the Provider of the necessities of life. The faithless man depends upon himself, or upon some human power structure for his needs to be met.

We probably can divide the belief systems of men into four categories. First there would be ATHEISM, which does not acknowledge God at all. I would group under this category all agnostics and secular humanists. This belief system is basically a belief in man as the only god there is. He believes he is the master of his fate, the captain of his soul, and this sort of system lends itself to statism, and the state in the person of some man can become the god figure. The Bible certainly teaches that we can expect a man of sin to appear on the stage of human history claiming that he himself is god.

The second belief system is PANTHEISM. This system believes that God is in everything. The universe is God and God is the universe. But the effect of this belief is to deny the personality of God. God as that Infinite and Absolute Being in itself has neither intelligence, consciousness or will. The Infinite comes into existence in the Finite (Charles Hodge).

With this view God has no existence except in the world. The world is the manifestation of this pantheistic god. This system produces many gods, millions of gods. It is from this belief system that we get Hinduism. Today we have New Age theology, which is essentially pantheistic. This is why Shirley McLain can say I am god. God is I.

According to pantheism, god is not transcendent. In practical terms, god is in all, and all is a part of god. Because the entire creation and god are one, there is a close relation to animism. Animals, trees, flowers, insects, and human beings are a part of god, and god is in all of them. A consistent pantheist would hold that plants and animals

are, in a sense, simultaneously our "brother" and god. To harm them in any way is to harm our kinsmen -- creation and god.

An article written by Kevin Clauson and published in an issue of *Antithesis* states that the new "progressive environmentalism" is simply a repackaging of old pantheistic errors. He says, and I quote, "They manifest their religion through such good works as guarding animal rights, stopping the deterioration of the ozone layer, saving the whale, eliminating pesticides, or in a more all-encompassing way, saving 'spaceship earth.'"

Pantheism confuses the creation and its Creator and deifies the creation by locating God in the creation as well as locating the creation in God. The media has promoted this New Age pantheism vigorously. For example, Clauson cites the popular motion picture --Star- Trek IV -- that has a plot built around a "save-the-whale" theme in global proportions. Unless two whales enclosed in a spaceship by an advanced civilization are safely returned to earth, then the earth will be destroyed by a built-in destructive mechanism.

If you watch for it you will see this progressive Environmentalist movement message coming across in media presentations. Ted Turner when he owned CNN network promoted his own Better World Society and its agenda. Time will not permit me to dwell longer on this belief system, but it is widespread today and you better believe it is because it is at root religiously pantheistic and either explicitly or implicitly anti-Christian.

The third belief system is DEISM. Basically this system of belief assigns either primary or total authority in matters of religion to reason. While most Deists deny the possibility of supernatural revelation, or if they do admit of some possibility of supernatural revelation, they would maintain that such revelation are truths of reason and must be subjected to the bar of reason. Deistical Rationalists say that it is inconsistent with the nature of God and His relation to the world to suppose that he interferes by direct agency in the course of events. Their theory of the universe is that God created the world and endowed His creatures with their attributes and properties and that He does not now exercise any providential control over His creation. They would say that God need not give constant supervision over what He has created for that would reveal that God must have been deficient either in wisdom or power when he created the universe. Thus, most Deists would reject the scriptures as of divine inspiration, especially since they reveal a God who has providential management over His creation, that He is a God who is not far from any of us, in whom we live and move and have our being. A God who sees every sparrow that falls and who is everywhere present and who claims Lordship for Himself over every aspect of life for every person who exists. Someone has said that Deism projects God as making the earth and then kicking it like a football to go on its way without any further need for his providential care.

The fourth system of belief is what we call Theism
This is the belief that there is One God who is Creator and Ruler of the universe and which embraces supernatural revelation via the Holy Scriptures. When we come to the subject of prayer we see the acknowledgement that God is both a God who communicates and who can be prayed to. He is a God who hears, a God who cares, a God who can act in history at all times in all places, both by natural and supernatural means. With God all things are possible. Christianity is Theistic. We believe God has personally appeared in history as Jesus Christ and that He acts in history as Redeemer as well as Creator.

We can appeal to Him for all of our needs to be met, and He is able to grant our requests because He is unlimited in His power and wisdom and dominion.

In the book of Leviticus we learn that the grain or bread offerings, which Moses instituted, were an acknowledgement by the redeemed sinner that all of the food supply comes from God and that man returns a portion to God to show his dedication of himself to this open-handed divine Provider, the one who both gives life and nourishes that life with food and drink and whatever else is needed. Give us this day our daily bread is an acknowledgement of our Father God as the Provider. In faith we believe He will supply all of our needs. Jesus taught his disciples, **do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor for your body, as to what you shall put on... Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?** (Matt. 6:25-26)

II. And Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors

This petition recognizes the reality of sin. Having dealt with the physical our Lord now addresses the spiritual. We have spiritual needs as well as physical needs. We are dependent upon our heavenly Father for forgiveness of sins.

The cross is implied in this petition, and the forgiven sinner is capable of forgiving those who have hurt or offended him. Indeed, it is an evidence of his new forgiven status that he can forgive as well as be forgiven. There is an ongoing need for this. There is yet sin in and around us, and the provision is to be found in our heavenly Father through the merits and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for us. We are called to live a life of repentance and faith. Forgiveness is still a necessity in this life. Like our daily bread we need daily cleansing, daily renewal so that the guilt and power of sin does not weight us down. This is a very necessary petition for all of us; forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

III. And Do Not Lead Us Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil.

This petition does not mean that God is in any way responsible for temptations. The Word of God says, 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. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

James 1:13 -15 (NKJV)

This petition takes into account the fact that all men are born in sin and are disposed to sin. Only the grace of God and his directive Providence will keep a man from sinning. Hodge wrote, "**The ordinary acts of men, and especially their wicked acts, are determined by their own natural inclinations and feelings. God does not awaken, or infuse those feelings or dispositions in order to determine sinners to act wickedly. On the other hand, all gracious or holy affections are infused or excited by the spirit of God.**" (A.A. Hodge, Vol, I, P. 615).

The prayer of the Christian that God lead him not into temptation is simply the recognition that left alone, left to his own human desires and ways, he will travel the path of temptation. We need the divine oversight, the special arrangements of providence, to keep us from the naturally sinful dispositions of our own wicked hearts. This petition recognizes the power and wisdom of God to so arrange and control all of the circumstances and events of life to our avoidance of temptation and evil.

This petition also personalizes that belief into a childlike dependence upon the wisdom and goodness of God to keep us from those places and things that would tempt us to sin. It is also a hedge of protection from the evil One, Satan, who is ever about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Deliver us from evil is the prayer of a man who knows that this world is filled with devils and evil. God alone can keep us from harm, hurt and danger. The Christian will avoid the pain and trouble of sin and Satan if he will simply pray this simple prayer. God alone has the power to save us from our sins and to deliver us from the very presence of sin. When you go to heaven you will not have to worry about evil anymore. But so long as you are in your present body in this evil world you and I need to pray, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Lastly, the concluding postscript is a fitting conclusion to the Lord's Prayer. It is a final Thankful Word, a closing doxology to the Lord of glory. **For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. AMEN.**

All of our needs, body, soul and spirit, are covered in the Lord's prayer. We confess our utter dependence on God to meet all these needs. He is the sovereign, loving heavenly Father, infinitely wise absolutely Good, full of compassion, who is everywhere present controlling all events great and small in a manner perfectly consistent with the nature of his creatures and with His own infinite excellence. We ascribe to Him **all glory, honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**

How do you stand today concerning these matters? Are you looking to God for all of your needs to be met? Do you seek to glorify God in your life? Can you say the Lord's Prayer with true understanding and a proper humility, recognizing God as your own heavenly Father who alone can make your life meaningful, fruitful and blessed?

Ask Him to save you today. Ask Jesus Christ to be your own personal Savior. He stands ready and willing to save you. Then take the Lord's Prayer as your own model prayer, enlarging on it, expanding it, but embodying those vital principles, which God Himself has taught us in your daily prayers.

Hymn #599 “**Savior, like a Shepherd Lead us**”

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