

Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Preached on: Sunday, June 9, 2013

What a privilege it is to come together and worship the Lord by immersing ourselves in his infallible Word. Will you take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 6. We return, once again, to our study of prayer. Sadly, there is a lot of unnecessary confusion and deception regarding prayer that has made its way into the church. Unfortunately, in most quarters, churches are doctrinally illiterate, they are incapable of distinguishing between truth and error.

Let me give you a few examples. I remember a few years ago I went to a very religious home and they asked me to pray for the husband who was very diseased. And so, I said to the wife as I stood over his bed, "Let's go before the throne of grace and endeavor to understand the Lord's will in this matter." And she quickly got very angry with me and she said, "No, we will not! Because I already know what the will of the Lord is. The will of the Lord is that he be healed." And so, she rebuked me sternly and said, "I will not allow you to pray a prayer of doubt and unbelief. What we need to do is name and claim the blessing." Unfortunately, that woman had been the victim of false teaching, poisoned by the serpents that spew out this deadly venom of the Word Faith movement.

There are other people who claim to have their own prayer language. No interpretation, they just begin to jabber and they are horribly offended if you ask them to explain where they see that in Scripture and what all of that meant. And I'm also amazed to see so many professing Christians around the world embracing Roman Catholic and Eastern mystical forms of contemplative prayer, prayer that is all about what they call centering where you have to shut out all of your thoughts and concepts and religious ideas and just focus on God. And then you begin to chant some word or some phrase over and over again until you induce a silent state of contemplation and meditation. And along with this, they recommend certain breathing practices to slow down your breath and help you empty your mind. Sadly, that's the opposite of what needs to happen. Their minds need to be filled with the knowledge and the truth of Christ, to have the mind of Christ.

This kind of New Age, occult mysticism is now running rampant in many so-called Christian churches, especially churches who have considered the Word of God to be inadequate and, therefore, they have rejected it. We see this in the Emergent Church, so-called church movement. It's endorsed by Rick Warren and the Purpose Driven Life, you hear them talking about that embracing and endorsing men like Henry Newman, Richard Foster, Thomas Merton, Brennan Manning. For example, Brennan Manning writes in his book "The Signature of Jesus," "The task of contemplative prayer is to help me achieve the conscious awareness of the unconditionally loving God dwelling with me." He goes on to say, "What masters of the interior life recommend is the discipline of 'centering down' throughout the day." And this is a very simple method of contemplation, contemplative prayer. He says that it has four steps. Manning begins by saying, "The first step in faith is to stop thinking about God at the time of prayer." Well, that's a great place to begin. The second step, according to Manning is to "without moving your lips, repeat

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the sacred word or phrase inwardly, slowly and often.” So much for Jesus’ word in Matthew 6:7 when he said, “And when you are praying do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do.” The third step concerns what you are to do in case of inevitable interruptions. The answer is to “simply return to listening to your sacred word and gently return your mind to your sacred word.” And then finally, he says, “After a 20 minute period of prayer,” which, by the way, he recommends two times a day, he says, “conclude with the Lord’s Prayer, a favorite psalm or some spontaneous words of praise and thanks.”

Well, my friends, Jesus warned us about false teachers that would rise up from within the ranks of the church and today they are as prevalent as blowflies on fresh meat. And frankly, unless they are relentlessly driven away, they will lay their eggs of deception in a church and absolutely allow those eggs to eat away at the truth, the only truth that can save and sanctify.

Yet, perhaps the greatest abuse of prayer occurs many times within our own circles, within our own church. And I speak of the sin of neglect, the sin of ignorance, having no habit of prayer and having no theology of prayer. We’ve addressed the former, now let’s continue to understand the latter, the theology of prayer given to us by the Lord himself and the pattern that he has set forth here in Matthew 6. Let’s look at the text again, that we began studying last week. Verse 9, Jesus says, “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’”

By way of reminder, Jesus gives us an outline of prayer. This is not a prayer but a pattern that helps guide our thinking and regulate our hearts with the truth. The first section is one that addresses God’s glory and it’s divided simply in two sections. There are three petitions in each section. The first section in verses 9-10 has to do with his name and his kingdom and his will. We studied the last time that with respect to his name, we are to affirm the fatherhood of God, reminding us of our spiritual origin, reminding us that we are his adopted sons, reminding us that we are children that should bear the resemblance of our Father. And we are to hallow his name, his name being the sum of all of his attributes. So, we are to acknowledge, we are to confess his supreme holiness. We are to glorify his utter perfection and love and righteousness. And that we are to pray for his kingdom, his kingdom to come, praying for the Messianic Kingdom to finally and suddenly explode upon the earth. This is essentially saying as John did at the end of Revelation in Revelation 22:20, “Come, Lord Jesus.” We are to pray, “Lord, come. We want to see you exalted in all of the earth.” And then, we are to pray for his will, that some day the whole earth will obey him perfectly because it is the supreme desire of his heart and it should be the desire of ours as well.

So, this is the heart attitude of proper prayer and it begins with these three petitions for God and his glory. But then, he moves to three more petitions with respect to our

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personal needs. Keep in mind now, that the will of God with the will of the Father must always precede our wills, his glory is most important, but our needs are also important to him. And so, the second part of our Lord's model addresses man's needs in verses 11 through the first part of verse 13. Petitions regarding daily bread, forgiveness and protection from temptation. We're going to look at the first two of those today and the last the next time we get together.

So, first of all, notice what he says here in verse 11, "Give us this day our daily bread." Beloved, here we can see, 1. Our dependence on God. How simple yet profound. And I wish to draw your attention to three elements of this prayer that really help us understand our dependence upon God. We're going to see that it is a humble prayer, it is a confident prayer but it is also a contented prayer.

So, first of all, notice the humility, the humble request here for these physical needs that begins this section. Think about it, by addressing our Father in heaven, we acknowledge him to be the sole provider of all that we have. He is the source of everything that we have. We contribute nothing. How often our prayers or the lack thereof, assume that somehow we are able to meet our own needs and supply our own needs. How often we take for granted our Father's endless provisions to sustain us and to bless us. His provision was set in motion, you will recall, in the Garden when he blessed Adam and Eve. We read about this in Genesis 1:29, "Behold," he says, "I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth and every tree which has fruit yielding seed. It shall be food for you." It's easy to take that for granted, isn't it? But everything that we have comes from him.

But, not only do we humbly acknowledge him as the sole source of our provisions, but also acknowledge our dependency upon his mercy in dispensing them. Once again, in an economy of words, the Lord expresses the proper humility that we should have when we come before him, contrasting that with the demanding entitlement of a proud heart. You see, there is no clenching of the fist here, there is no demanding, there is not the whiny complaint of a spoiled brat. Even as we must first approach our Savior acknowledging our spiritual bankruptcy, begging for undeserved mercy and grace, so too, we stand before our heavenly Father acknowledging our utter dependency upon his kind provision.

James helps us understand this in James 1 beginning in verse 17, we read that "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be as it were the first fruits among His creatures."

Beloved, how often do you think of this when you come before the Lord? How often do you think about how the Father has given us all these things and that he is the Father of Lights. What an amazing expression. This was an ancient Jewish expression that referred to our God as the Creator God of the sun and the moon and stars. But as James reminds

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us, unlike the celestial bodies that constantly shift and vary in their intensity of light as they orbit in their journey, there is no variation in our Father.

But, he says, in the exercise of his will he brought us forth by the word of truth. In other words, that divine act of regeneration where we are born-again spiritually and he says we are “the first fruits among his creatures.” In other words, we are the first evidence of a new creation that is to come, a new heaven and a new earth. A new glory, a new life of which we now can have just a foretaste to enjoy as we live in sweet fellowship with our Father and with one another. Friends, these are the deep truths that should animate your heart and animate your praise when you come before the Lord. And, therefore, cause you to give gratitude to the Father who is ultimately concerned with our daily physical needs as every good father should be.

But, it is also a confident prayer. It's a humble prayer but also a confident prayer. And here's what I mean by this, notice how he says we are told to ask him to give us. Why? Because the Father loves to give. Dad's, we all know that, don't we? We love to give good things to our children. The Psalmist says in Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” You see, my friends, when the Lord is the object of our delight, the desires of our heart become the desires of his heart as well.

Later Jesus speaks more about this confident trust in Matthew 6 beginning in verse 25. Here's what the Lord says, “I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” Now, friends, here's the key that unlocks the storehouse of heaven, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” What a wonderful promise. And, again, there is the confidence that we have when we come before our heavenly Father.

So, our prayers should be humble and confident but, thirdly, they should be contented and we see that in this text. Notice how we are to be contented with two things: the object and the amount. In other words, the quality and the quantity of what he provides. The object is bread. Bread is considered to be the perfect food. In fact, we can live a long time on just bread and water. And bread here is symbolic of all of our physical needs,

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whatever is required to sustain us physically. So, in effect, what we are saying is, "Father, I am content with the very basics that you alone provide to sustain me physically."

And what about the amount? Well, it's a daily amount. It's not weekly, it's not monthly, it's not yearly. In fact, the grammar in the original language helps us understand this, literally it says, "Our daily bread give us this day." The placement here helps us understand the priority. In other words, he's saying, "Give us today the portion that is needed to sustain us for any one day. And we will trust you for the days to follow." Too often, I fear that we are discontent with God's provisions for us. We always want more than our daily proportion, we're never satisfied. Rather than asking for today's bread we lust after tomorrow's luxuries. I fear that discontent is a besetting sin especially in our culture, in our land of abundance. It's a form of rebellion against God that causes us to murmur against him. I know a number of very wealthy people that are very unhappy and I know a lot of very poor people whose hearts are filled with joy.

I recall the first time I taught the students in Kenya. I had a room full of pastors, some of them had walked for three weeks to come and study. And I noticed that a number of them didn't have anything to write with so I gave them the syllabus and it was a good thing that I brought with me a little Ziploc bag full of ballpoint pens. So, I handed out ballpoint pens and, my friends, you would think that I had given them a new Mercedes. They rejoiced and I noticed that they were always happy, they were always singing. I also gave them candy bars every time they would come in. That's a good way to endear your students to you. And, once again, you would think it was a Christmas party or something. They would hug me, some of them would tear up and, "Aw, thank you!" Some of them had never had a candy bar. And yet, our children pout and whine when they don't get a new smartphone or they don't get the latest video game. And we, as adults, tend to do the same thing.

You see, it's because of our very nature that the more we get, the more we think we deserve and the more that we want. And sadly, many times, we as wealthy people seek life and pleasure in the things of this world whereas many times the poor find their joy solely in the Lord and they freely submit to and take pleasure in whatever he supplies for them physically. The Psalmist says in Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And besides thee I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." My friends, that is what animates true contentment.

God has given us a graphic example of discontentment in his Word. In Exodus and in Numbers we have a great picture of discontentment with the children of Israel. You will recall that they had been delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians, they had witnessed incredible miracles of divine deliverance. And so, as they go their way in their journey in the wilderness heading towards the land that God had promised them, God provided for them manna. In Hebrew, manhu, which means "what is it?" And it was perfectly nutritious bread, a bread-like substance that became the staple of their diet. It was the grain of heaven. Frankly, it was the picture of God's future provision for our spiritual

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need would be met in the Lord Jesus Christ who referred to himself as “the living bread which came down from heaven,” in John 6. And later he added that if anyone ate of this bread, he would live forever. We even read that Christ is “the hidden manna given to overcomers,” in Revelation 2:7. Indeed, all we need is Christ.

But, in that story, we are told that manna rained down from heaven along with the dew of the night and it would melt during the heat of the day. And each day the people were to gather enough for that day and thereby trust the Lord for the next day's provision. If you took more than you needed, God would cause it to rot away. And if you didn't take enough, you would go hungry. Here again, we see a picture of what the Lord reminds us, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Not a request pleading for divine generosity, but one that demonstrates that we are thankful for and content with what he provides each day. But, in that story, you may recall that the Israelites began to complain, began to murmur and wail and cry out. Oh, they longed for the foods of Egypt, for the meat in particular.

So, Moses asked the Lord what to do because of their ingratitude and distrust of his faithful provision. According to Numbers 11:10, we read, “The anger of the Lord was greatly kindled.” And so, what we see is that God basically says, “Ok, I've had enough. You want meat, I'll give you meat.” And according to Numbers 11, beginning at the end of verse 18, Moses tells the people, “Therefore the LORD will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’” And in verse 31, we read what happened, “Now there went forth a wind from the LORD and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground.” In other words, they flew about three feet off the ground, they were easy to catch. We're talking about billions of quail. In verse 32, “The people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers),” by the way, that would be about 60-70 bushels of quail. That was for the ones that gathered the least, “and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.”

My, what an amazing scene that exposes what happens when people begin to seek life apart from what God provides which is a form of idolatry. As we look at this, what we see happening is that it results in a heart of ingratitude and discontent which inevitably lead to human greed and hoarding. And we actually have television programs that picture this.

Verse 33, “While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague. So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah,” the graves of craving, the graves of lust, “because there they buried the people who had been greedy.”

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Beloved, are you content with the provisions that God has given you? The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." And he said in 2 Timothy 6:6, "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by..." What? "By contentment."

In his book "The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment" a very young 17th century Puritan pastor by the name of Jeremiah Burrows defined Christian contentment this way, he said that "it is the sweet inward quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition." That is the attitude, my friends, that will cause us to pray with humility, with confidence and contentment, "Give us this day our daily bread." It's not that we pray that phrase necessarily, but it's that we have these great truths, these great understandings of theology that animates that kind of a prayer.

But, then the Lord moves from petitions regarding daily bread and our dependence on God to the issue of forgiveness, speaking of our debts to God. Notice, verse 12, he says, "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." And here, also, I would like to draw you to three concepts that emerge from this text: first, our need for daily pardon; secondly, our provision for daily pardon; and finally the precondition for daily pardon.

So first, let's think of our need for daily pardon. You see, what is implied here is that we much first recognize that we are always in a need of constant forgiveness. We need daily pardon of sin, our spiritual debt to God. Verse 12, again, says, for we are to say "forgive us." Literally, it means to cancel out the guilt resulting from disobedience. And what are we to be forgiven? Well, he says, "our debts." Now, you must understand, this is not referring to some kind of financial obligation, we're not pleading for some kind of divinely sanctioned bankruptcy here, but rather, he's referring to a moral debt owed to God. In fact, the term in the original language is one of five New Testament terms for sin referring to moral or spiritual debt to God that must be paid. So, debt here, metaphorically is speaking of sin. We read about this, for example, in Matthew 18.

So, this is not, friends, the prayer of a sinner who is pleading for divine mercy and pardon from an offended God. This is not a plea here for judicial forgiveness necessary for salvation but this is the cry of a child who has become aware of his sin and who knows he has grieved his Father in heaven. This is a child who feels the pain of separation, the pain of alienation between him and his Father and he longs to mend that breach. And how sad, for some Christians, to walk so far away from the Lord that they no longer miss him. Yet he longs for that relationship to be restored. He hates sin and he hates having to discipline those that he loves but he will do that in order to restore that relationship.

So, what is this debt that Jesus refers to? Maybe I can help you to understand it this way, we are all created by God and we've all been created to give him glory and as born-again creatures, we are all people who have been given the Spirit of God that can help us be obedient to him and we have, therefore, shall we say, a debt of obedience because of his

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mercy and his grace. But sin is disobedience which incurs the debt of punishment. Now, this is not judicial punishment, the punishment of eternal judgment. No, that was dealt with when we came to Christ, right? when we were saved, when we trusted Christ as Savior, we were declared righteous. That is our justification and no one, therefore, can bring a charge against God's elect. But, when believers sin as we do, we incur a debt of punishment that results in broken fellowship, it results in the Father's chastening which sometimes can be severe. It results in the forfeiture of divine blessing, even the loss of future reward and it is for this debt that Jesus tells us we must ask for forgiveness.

There are two kinds of forgiveness in Scripture and this will help you understand if you think of the distinction between our justification and our sanctification. First, there is a judicial or what we would call a forensic forgiveness in our justification. Remember now, in our justification, God declares us righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ and there we are forgiven from the penalty of sin. Our eternal debt of sin has been paid in full by the Lord Jesus Christ. All our sins have been forgiven, past, present and future. That debt has been settled once and for all before the lawgivers bar of justice but there are still consequences when we sin.

And this leads us to the second kind of forgiveness and that is that paternal or that fatherly forgiveness that we see as part of our sanctification and here I'm referring to sanctification as that process whereby we become more conformed to the image of Christ, a process in which we participate by the power of the Spirit. Remember what Paul says in Philippians 2:12, that we are to "work out our salvation in fear and in trembling" and yet it is God that is working in us to accomplish those things.

So, we must remember that because we remain incarcerated in this unredeemed humanness we continue to sin. In fact, Paul said in Romans 7:23 that "we are prisoners of the law of sin which is in our members." In other words, in our body. And it is, beloved, for this debt of remaining sin that we implore a divine pardon. We have a wonderful illustration of this in the text that was read earlier today, in John 13. You will recall that Jesus is there with his disciples in the Upper Room, they are ready to decline and they have dirty feet and it was the custom to have a lowly servant come and wash the feet. Nobody wants to be sitting and eating next to a person whose feet are all nasty as they were in those days. But since there was no servant available to do this, and certainly none of the disciples wanted to do it because they were still arguing about which one was going to be greatest in the kingdom, Jesus assumes that lowly position and in verse 4 of John 13 we read that Jesus "got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.' Peter said to Him, 'Never shall You wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.'"

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In other words, Peter was basically clean, he did not need a full body wash, ok? Just his feet. And here's the Lord's point, and this is an unmistakable analogy that is so insightful in helping us understand the difference between the two kinds of forgiveness. You see, in verse 10, the bathing illustrates that judicial, that forensic forgiveness of justification. By the blood of Christ he had been completely cleansed, he had been declared righteous. The ultimate debt had been paid on the basis of actually the Lord's upcoming death on the cross. So, Peter didn't need to be bathed again in justification, that was already taken care of, that was a divine cleansing that took place once and for all. And there's nothing deficient in that judicial act whereby Peter was declared righteous. There was no need, shall we say, to be saved over again. We're not born-again and then again and then again. We never need to be rejustified.

But there is an ongoing need to be sanctified and that's what must be understood in the concept of the foot washing. The foot washing illustrates that paternal, that fatherly forgiveness found in sanctification. Think of it this way: God as our judge had his wrath, his justice completely satisfied at the cross. When we come to Christ we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, but as our Father, he desires unbroken fellowship, unbroken relationship with his children and unconfessed sin, ongoing sin destroys that fellowship. It dishonors him, it displeases him and it even retards that glorious process of sanctification whereby we are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. You see, sin distorts his image in us. Those characteristics within us that should cause people to look at us and say, "My, that's a son of the Father."

You see, the dirt on the feet symbolized these daily debts and without the routine washing of sin through daily confession, that accumulation of dirt, that filth as we walk through life, builds up. Without confession and repentance, the dirt of our iniquities continue to build up and we forfeit blessing and we begin to feel the sting of divine chastening in our lives.

So, think of it this way: while our justification pays the ultimate debt of the penalty of sin, it does not free us from the power and the presence of sin. If I can say it a little bit differently, nor does the grace of justification somehow nullify the consequences of sin in our life. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, "that because of sin many of you are weak and sick and some even sleep."

Beloved, we must understand that sin is far more damaging than we tend to understand. Think of it this way, every difficulty in your life, every dissatisfaction you experience is a consequence of sin. Every ache, every pain, every sorrow, every sickness, every disease, every crime, every fear, every discouragement, every death is a result of this deadly toxin. Sometimes I like to think of it like radiation, the more we're exposed to the subatomic particles of radiation, the more they can penetrate deep within the body and damage the biological cells of the body and hasten death. Beloved, this is why we need a daily cleansing from the contamination of sin.

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And what a tragedy to see Christians who are either blind to their sin or they love it so much that they refuse to kill it, they refuse to go to war against it. And in their stubborn rebellion, they stagger under the weight of the Father's loving discipline and then as you look at their life, it becomes more and more of a disaster. It's heartbreaking to see this. Beloved, if you refuse to keep short accounts with God, your debt of sin is going to accumulate with compounding interest and it will drive you into spiritual bankruptcy. Unfortunately, too often we fail to confess our sin as the Lord is having us do here, to ask for forgiveness as Jesus directs. And because our hearts are so deceitful we typically don't even see our own sin. Oh, I can see the speck in your eye from a mile away, I just can't see the log in my own.

Let me ask you, When was the last time you came before the Lord in the quietness of your own closet so convicted over personal sin that you confessed it to him, that you repented of it and asked for forgiveness and then begged the Spirit of God to help you go to war against it? Now, I'm not talking about those anemic confessions of sins in general, kind of the supper table type of prayer. You know, when we get all King Jamesy, "Father, forgive us wherein we have failed thee." Now, I'm not talking about that type of stuff. Folks, take the mask off for a moment and go into your private prayer closet and when you confess your sin, get specific.

Pray like this, "Lord, forgive me for my immoral fantasy life that I feed with all of the filth that I've been watching this last week. O Father, forgive me for my hatred of my sister in Christ, my refusal to try to reconcile with her and forgive her. Lord, forgive me for being a sluggard that spends all of my time watching tv and playing video games and fooling around with Facebook and all this stuff. O God, forgive me for being a glutton, for becoming so morbidly obese I can't hardly even walk and I bring reproach upon Christ because of my lack of self-control. Lord, forgive me specifically for my idolatry. I love my car so much more than you. I love my baby so much more than you. I spend all of my time, all of my energy, all of my thoughts, all of my money on these things and as a result, I don't really serve you. Father, forgive me for my spiritual apathy, for my lack of love for your Word, for my lack of desire to commune with you in prayer. Lord, I fear that I have left my first love. Lord, forgive me for my pride because I love to be noticed by other people. I love to dominate the conversation. Lord, I'm the hero of all of my stories. Lord, I love to control other people and I love to criticize other people because it makes me look good."

Beloved, this is what Jesus is talking about when he tells us to pray, "Father, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Beloved, you've got to understand that the mark of a mature believer will be his willingness to deal with his sin, a willingness to search it out and then confess it and then kill it. You must learn to cry out to God as the Psalmist did, "Examine me O Lord and try me, test my mind and my heart. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me." To be able to come before the Lord and say, "O Father, forgive me. I have offended the one who gave himself for me. Lord, forgive me for destroying my own testimony and bringing reproach upon you and upon your church. Lord, forgive me for my

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Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Preached on: Sunday, June 9, 2013

sins, these things that I've talked to you about because they are ripping my family apart, they are destroying my marriage, they are portraying to my children that which you would never want them to be. O Father, forgive me."

Dear Christian, please hear this, you will absolutely never experience the fullness of God's blessing for you, you will never truly enjoy Christ, you will never be effective in serving Christ, you will never really long to see his kingdom come and his will be done until you get serious about your sin. And then by the power of the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body. This is why Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:7 and also in verse 10, "Discipline yourself. Discipline yourself for the sake of godliness for it is for this we labor and we strive." You see, mature saints are going to be constant confessors.

1 John 1 beginning at verse 8, John warns believers, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So, what Jesus is saying here in this phrase is first of all, realize your need for a daily pardon and secondly, understand the provision for daily pardon. And we see this is found in our merciful Father, the one that we address. Our heavenly Father loves to cross out those debts as quickly as we confess them. He loves to forgive. He loves to bless. In Psalm 32, David speaks of the almost unbearable weight of divine chastening in his life. In verse 3, he said, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.'" And then he says, "And Thou forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found."

The great Puritan, John Trout, that had such an impact on Charles Spurgeon said this about David's confession: "He acknowledged the debt and God crossed the book. God crossed the black lines of his sins with the red lines of his Son's blood."

O dear friends, the joy of reconciliation and restored fellowship. This is what the Lord wants for us. After that cleansing confession, David went on to write the end of verse 7, "Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance." He went on to say in verse 10, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart." O child of God, this is why the Lord would have us pray, "Forgive us our debts."

But finally, there is a precondition for that daily pardon. Notice again the text, "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Notice also in verse 14 and following, "For if you forgive men," the Lord says. "If you forgive men for their transgressions your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

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Now, let's be crystal clear here: God will never rescind our permanent acquittal in our justification. There is no such thing as loosing your salvation. Indeed, our forgiveness is eternal. However, he will withhold his temporal forgiveness if we refuse to forgive others. You see, the Lord is teaching us a very important principle here and that is that mercy begets mercy. Mercy received must result in mercy given. I would ask you this morning, Do you have an unforgiving spirit? Is there someone within your family or perhaps your church family that you just don't like and you don't want to be reconciled with. You never pray for this reconciliation, you've never asked for forgiveness or perhaps they've asked you for forgiveness and you've refused to give it to them. If that is the case, all I can say to you is what hypocrisy. Think about it. We who have been forgiven the greater debt, we're not going to forgive the lesser? We've all been sinned against. It's part of life, isn't it? Part of living in a fallen world. Some have been sinned against worse than others, but my friends, don't you dare nurture an unforgiving spirit. Your heart needs to always be receptive to reconciliation. You need to pray for it. You need to try to cause it to happen. You need to be the initiator and you should certainly forgive when it is asked for. We are most like God when we forgive, aren't we? It doesn't come natural, it's only by the power of the Spirit.

The bottom line, what the Lord is reminding us of here, is that God is going to treat us like we treat others. It's so sad to be around a bitter person who harbors the spirit of unforgiveness. I've seen it so often. They will endlessly rehearse how they've been sinned against and they know the details as if it happened yesterday but it may have happened 30 years ago. Such a tragic thing and they love to tell the story but it's the wrong story to love to tell. The wound never heals for those type of people. In fact, it grows deeper because in our imagination the offense gets greater and greater every time we tell the story, right? And they end up seeking revenge rather than reconciliation, rather than turning it over to God.

Beloved, if that is you, it will destroy you. Remember the unforgiving slave in Matthew 18? The king forgave him the large debt and he refused to forgive a fellow slave a lesser debt and as a result, in verse 34, we read, "And his lord moved with anger handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him." Although his debt had been forgiven, the master would now chasten him until he learned to forgive. You know, it's easy to spot an unforgiving Christian, a person who has been given over to the torturers of life. They will hiss like a cornered cat when certain names come up. You will find them to be sour and sullen, often depressed, easily offended. Typically when there is some type of a conflict in the church, they're in the center of it. They keep a record of wrongs, they have a long list of people they will have nothing to do with and what you will find is the Lord will remove them from any place of service because they're ineffective, they're impotent. Over time, they will have fewer and fewer friends and ultimately their fate will be one of loneliness. And if they continue, the Lord will allow their bitterness to destroy their health.

Beloved, be quick to forgive and forget as the Lord does. He takes our sins, he casts them as far as the east is from the west, he buries them in the depths of the sea and he

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remembers them no more. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

So, may I leave you with these thoughts, challenge your own heart with these principles. Behind this whole concept of asking for forgiveness of our debts remember that you have a need for a daily pardon because of daily sin. Remember that you have a provision for daily pardon in our heavenly Father. And then, remember that there is a precondition for that daily pardon and that is that you be willing to forgive others. May the prayer of our hearts simply be, "Lord, cleanse me daily from my sin that I may be debt free and with forgiveness may I win more joy, O Christ, with thee."

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these timeless truths that are so transforming and yet so difficult for us to live out in our flesh. Therefore, we plead the power of your Spirit that we may do your will. So, we commit it all to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.