

Model for Praying - Part 5

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the integration of spiritual and material needs in prayer, highlighting God's provision for those who are obedient and loyal to Him.

Duration: 44:50

Scripture: Exodus 20:3, Psalm 34:1, Matthew 6:11, Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:15, John 1:1, Acts 11:29-30

Topics: "Praying"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of integrating all aspects of life within the orbit of God's purpose and glory. He highlights the twisted nature of sin that leads us to desire more than our necessities, while a large portion of the world lacks even their basic needs. The preacher draws parallels between our lives and the frugality of Jesus in His demands of the Father. He also mentions the model of prayer that Jesus taught, which starts with focusing on God and His kingdom before addressing our own needs.

Transcript

Will you kindly turn with me to the Gospel recorded by Saint Matthew in chapter 6 and verse 11, where we read according to the version that you may have in your hand, give us today our daily bread or give us this day our daily bread. These words of our text introduce us to the second half of this model for praying. Hitherto, very much like the first half of the Ten Commandments, the entire prayer has had to do with God and on previous occasions we have indicated that that surely is not without its own eloquent significance for anyone who wants to learn.

Prayer must begin with God. If we are not really concerned about God's glory, God's kingdom and God's name, then we simply haven't learned the elementary lessons that will qualify us to know the larger and the deeper lessons of the prayer life. The entire section leading up to this has to do with God.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

It is all God. I was amazed when I came to continue to wait upon the Lord for this evening hour how very much our morning and our evening messages today seem to dovetail and to form one complete whole. Now one cannot be other than impressed with the way in which our Lord Jesus has arranged this model for praying in a way that we move so naturally and so unobtrusively from the sublimities of the things that

relate to God, God's name, God's kingdom, God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

We move from those high sublimities right down to the mundane things of bread and butter for a Christian man or woman. You see this reveals how completely integrated our own Lord's life really was. It was as natural for him to pray for bread and butter with the next breath as natural could be because his concern even with whatever God gave him, his concern was to use such material things or whatever as God would give him to use them to the glory of the God whom he has been worshiping and would have us worship according to the first two or three main sections of the prayer preceding the one before us tonight.

And so he passes quite easily from the one to the other. You have the same kind of thing of course with the Apostle Paul. This is often quoted as an illustration.

You remember how in in 1 Corinthians 15, 14, I'm sorry 15, the Apostle Paul speaks eloquently about the resurrection of our Lord and then he comes toward the end in verses 54 to 57 so then he says if when this corruptible shall have put on corruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is your sting? Oh grave where is your victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There he is with the sublimities. And with the next breath he comes down and he starts the next chapter now concerning the collection. It almost takes your breath away.

He's come down from the sublimities to the mundane things of making a collection in order to alleviate the distant saints in Jerusalem. But you see to the man of God all life is unified. All life is one.

And the life within us as well as life outside of us should be so integrated that everything everything comes within the orbit of God's purpose and of God's glory and of God's will so that we too ought to be able to go as naturally from the one to the other as our Lord and his Apostles. Well now in this passage in this text before us tonight there are two or three things I would like to try and share with you. And we are really going to take off tonight to start almost where we ended this morning.

And that is not by my own planning but rather in the very nature of the case. In the first place tonight I want to I want to think of the place of the material. The place of the material in the life of a man or a woman of God.

Now this is a perpetual and challenging exercise of the mind. What place should you and I give to material things? How should we treat this world? What should we do with our material possessions, material things generally? What should be our attitude? It's a major problem. This area of discipline has witnessed the spiritual shipwreck of a countless throng in every age, in every age.

Men and women, young men and young women who simply did not know what God expected them to do with their material property, so-called. Well now let's look and see what key, what key to unlock and unravel that issue we may have in this particular context. First of all let us note that according to our Lord we are to take cognizance of the obvious propriety of praying for our legitimate material needs.

Now this is very simple and but it's very basic. The propriety of praying for our simplest material need Give us this day our daily bread. Just imagine it.

The omnipotent God of all the earth came down, gathered a group of men around him and said look fellows you've asked me to teach you how to pray. And he's been dealing with God in all his glory and these various petitions and now he comes to them and he says to them straight in the eye he says and then he says you can ask God to give you for that day the bread you need. Now one sometimes meets a false spirituality, I'm sure you've met it as I have met it, that appears to miss this point and that seems to think it's somewhat carnal or pseudo spiritual to be praying about bread and butter and such things.

I have met people who believe that this is really out of the realm of propriety. Don't be put off by them. Our Lord Jesus taught his disciples that they might pray for the bread for the day.

Whatever may be the precise background to such foreign ideas they completely misrepresent the truth because you see God is our Creator and he has purposely made us in such a manner that we have recurring needs of sleep and of rest, food and drink, clothing and shelter from the elements. That the reference of such needs to God in prayer should be in any wise improper is a notion that is not only inconsistent with what is revealed about God but with a clear-cut words of our Lord in our text tonight. No man who has learned honestly to pray the opening words of this model for praying, the opening words, should fall into the snare of believing that he cannot go on thereafter and bring his material needs especially for that day before God.

Now this should be a great comfort to us. I think that we all need to take this very seriously. There may come a time when you and I will have far greater need than we have today.

May the Lord save us from it. But there may well be lurking around the corner of history circumstances wherein you and I will be in need of a prayer such as this. May the Lord prepare us for that day.

Let us not imbibe this false spirituality for it is actually a gross indictment of the Creator whom it is our desire to magnify and to serve. Moreover the failure to acknowledge the rightful place of the material in the life of a man has played a not inconsiderable part in the fostering of communism and of that kind of socialism. When Christian people, and I underline that word Christian people, have given the impression that material things don't matter when they do, then what happens is this that the enemies of God and the enemies of the gospel get hold of this imbalance in the Christians teaching or philosophy or theology and and they bring out something which is out of all proportion to the biblical truth.

Don't forget, I find this very challenging, that the roots of socialism, particularly British socialism, go back into a situation such as this. I'm not here to trace the roots of socialism. But they go back to a situation where Christian people said and preached that the body was unimportant.

You don't need to worry about material things or the welfare of men who are trampled under in society. Don't worry about it. Now that is the ground in which socialism and communism of the grossest kind breathes.

And at the bar of judgment, my friends, some Christian people may be held responsible for the germinating of much that we call communism today. Now he who takes this petition seriously can't fail to see the balance and the equipoise in our Lord's teaching. He assures us of God's interest in the material welfare of his people, the legitimacy of praying for things material.

But now come from the propriety of the material to something else. We must not even momentarily eclipse the priority of the spiritual. And I want to say this with the same emphasis though I don't stay very long with

it.

Let me repeat. You have only to examine the setting of this text and every text needs to be seen in its context but this one very specially. You have only to examine the setting of our text to see this.

The preceding one and initial concern of prayer centers, let me repeat, in the hallowing of God's name, the hastening of his kingdom and the honoring of his will. Then the petitions that follow are again spiritual in nature. Do you remember what Jesus tells his disciples to pray for next? Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven those that are indebted to us.

And deliver us from the evil or from the evil one and then to conceive thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. You see, this is spiritual. So what we have is this.

It's a beautiful picture. This concern for our material things in this world, this is sandwiched in between basic spiritual issues that relate directly to God and spiritual issues that relate directly to the believer. Oh the pattern is so beautiful.

Who said our Lord was not an artist? I suggest to you that you look at this when you get home again and you will see how magnificently beautiful it is as well of course as true. The place of the material sandwiched in between our real concern for God and for the spiritual necessities of our own life. In other words, if you are really concerned with God's name and God's kingdom and God's glory and if you are really growing in grace and being able to forgive others and seeking daily forgiveness from God for yourself.

If you're concerned when in the battle and with the battle against the wiles of the devil and if you want over and about everything to give God the honor that belongs to him, then you can depend upon it. The Lord is concerned to give you your daily bread. Now we turn from the place of the material to the privilege of the loyal.

Seen in its context then, the petition for daily bread takes the place which material things generally are meant to occupy in our daily lives. In this context however you will see that our Lord is assuming the loyalty of the petitioner. Not only as expressed in the opening section of the prayer but also in terms of his desire and determination again to go out into life, to forgive other people who trespassed against him, to be involved in the warfare with evil one and with evil and to bring honor and glory to God.

Now any man who falls into that category can daily and should daily pray, give us this day our daily bread. It's your privilege. Neither are we to interpret the word bread too literally.

I guess we're up against it here. Some people insist that we should interpret the Bible very literally. You know I want to suggest to you that you mustn't interpret this too literally.

I believe God puts a bit of butter on his bread. I've never had bread from God without a smear of butter and of jam on it. Have you? Our God is not stingy.

He keeps his word and he keeps his promise but what I'm saying is this, he more than keeps his promise. He gives good measure, pressed down and running over. You ask for daily bread, blessed be his holy name.

It is my experience he puts jam on the bread. If time permitted I would dearly love to tell, I'm going to tell people here one day, how the Lord called me away from things that really mattered to me, really meant very much to me and demanded of me that I should put on one side something that I very rarely talk about. But I want to bear witness from this pulpit tonight that when God takes something away from you, whose value in terms of material things can hardly be computed, the Lord says and means it, I'm not your debtor and he isn't.

Now it is a precious fact of revelation and it is a pro it is proven in Christian experience that the relationship whereby we are surely and securely bound to God has its obverse side and as its obverse side the guarantee of our adequate provisions from God. Now can I repeat that? Those who are securely bound to God, dedicated to God, that bondage, that chain if you like that binds us to God has as its other side, its obverse side, the guarantee of our adequate resources from God. There are two sides to every coin, even to the kind of Christian experience.

Now on the one side is the challenging and the painful discipline involved in making ourselves available to the Lord for his will. Oh my some of us have to fight with this. God wants us to do something.

He's calling us to go somewhere. He's telling us he has a plan for us and it's not very promising materially and we're not quite sure what to do. But the more we come into the presence of God and the more we consider these great things that we have at the beginning of the prayer, the name of God, the kingdom of God, the will of God, the more we see that this difficult path is the path of God's will.

And we say to the Lord, Lord all right if this is your will bind us to yourself and your will with a chain and it seems to be a chain of steel. But I want to tell you that it has an under side of gold. The man or the woman that is thus bound to God and to his will is the very man and the very woman who will discover that God cannot prove and will not prove unfaithful to that person.

The more securely and the more intimately I am bound to God in the bundle of life and of obedience, the greater is my security in God. Each discipline makes the relationship the more consciously deep so that the more it progresses the more intimately aware does one become of the God who is one's father and is one's king and keeps his promises. Thus to know God and establish communion with him in terms of the several relationships outlined here is to live within the compass of a fullness of provision that cannot fail.

If the one side of the chain that binds us to him is steel, the other is gold. Gold whose every link is precious beyond compare. To have a father who is God and a God who is sovereign over all things and all people leaves no problem beyond our capacity to tackle.

No duty beyond our ability to perform. It is the privilege of the loyal children of God to be able to go anywhere in his will knowing that he will hear this prayer, give us this day our daily bread. But notice this other thing.

The measure of our obedience to God has a way of influencing our confidence in God. Now let us be clear that we are not suggesting that God only blesses the obedient and the faithful. You know if that were so, none of us would be blessed.

He causes his son to rise upon the just and the unjust. Merciful God. And his reign descends alike upon the just and the unjust.

The point we are making is that the consciousness of having disobeyed and dishonored our God has a way of influencing our confidence in God. See when you have broken the commandments, when you have transgressed, when you have sinned, then you cannot come to God with confidence and plead his promises before him. Your faith in him seems to warp, it seems to fade, it seems to wither, it seems to flee.

You just can't plead. But the man who is moving in the way of God's will and knows that he's obeying God's will, be it a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, that person can plead the promises. And that is the person who's going to rise up with wings as eagles.

If our faith is weak, now this may sound strange, but I'm quite sure it's true. If our faith is weak, the best way to strengthen it is to concentrate not upon strengthening faith but upon obedience to God. You concentrate upon obedience to God and you will find by your obedience that there will be generated within you by the Spirit the confidence that you can trust God anywhere for anything within his will.

I have found far too many people in the Christian Church who are concentrating on increasing their faith, forgetting the importance of obedience. Whenever a man is disobedient and has a guilty conscience about his disobedience, then that person is incapacitated from praying the prayer of faith. Obey God and keep short accounts with God and confess your sins to God before the sun sets upon them.

Put things right with God and right with men. Walk in the light as he is in the light and you will find that you can ask God in any circumstances to fulfill the promises he himself has made and caused to be written for your profit and mine. Oh, this is precious.

That's why we shall be singing tonight to conclude Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady's lovely hymn. Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy, the praises of my God shall still my heart and tongue employ. Of his deliverance I will boast till all that are oppressed from mine example comfort take and soothe their griefs to rest.

The hosts of God encamp around the dwellings of the just, deliverance he affords to all who on his succor trust. Oh, make but trial of his love, experience will decide how blessed are they and only they who in his truth abide. And then this last stanza, fear him ye saints.

You remember it? Fear him ye saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear. Make you his service, your delight, your wants shall be his care. Hallelujah.

That's wonderful. That's saying exactly what I am much feebly trying to say tonight. The privilege of the loyal is this.

It may be difficult to bind myself to the will of God, to go where he's calling me, to do what he's demanding of me, but when I find myself saying to him, thine am I by all ties, and I submit to him, the adverse side of all that is this, as I submit in faith and obedience, I can expect him to keep his word and he will. There's not a place in the whole vast world, but that I can pray this prayer, give us this day our daily bread. That brings me to the last thing, the prayer of the spiritual.

Now one has heard this petition dismissed as the plea of a child, and as something incompatible with maturity. Such an attitude simply betrays a startling measure of blindness to the realities of the case. In point of fact, these words, taken in their context and properly understood, betray spiritual maturity of the very highest order.

Let me just briefly say three things. One, the reality of the petitioner's previous worship and concession to God of honor, and the acknowledgement of God's right to rule, are reflected in this simple plea for daily bread. If the petitioner really meant what Jesus told us to pray in the preceding verses, then we prove that when we come to ask for our daily bread.

How? Well now, think of it negatively and positively. The request is not made for so much as might tempt the recipient to live aloof from God, even for one solitary day. He only asks enough for today.

And that's a mark of spirituality, if ever there was one. Jesus teaches his disciple, his loyal disciple to pray, give us today our daily bread. The spiritual nature of the petitioner emerges in its true light, of course, if you contrast the underlying attitude revealed here to that exemplified, for example, in the prodigal son.

We've referred to him before today. Do you remember how he said to the father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me? You see, why did he say that? He wanted a lump sum, he wanted the whole thing. Why? Well, I'll tell you.

He wanted to get away from his father. He wanted to see the back of the old man. And he just wanted to get right away from the home and its atmosphere and everything else.

He wants to live away from home. He said, Jesus, you pray, give us today our daily bread. Why? Well, because he envisages the desire of the loyal child to come into his father's presence every day.

Jesus does not envisage a day, my friend, when the loyal disciple does not come to the heavenly father. And so he does not teach him to pray for a week's supply, nor a month's supply, nor a year's supply, but one day at a time. This is maturity.

Look at it more positively. To have his needs in the father's hand is far better for the petitioner than to be loaded with a week's or a month's supply at a time. And the reason is this.

The man who can really pray the first part of this prayer and then proceed honestly to pray the latter part of the Lord's Prayer, that person finds as much delight in the presence of God as he does in the presence that God gives him, in the gift that God gives him, the gift of daily bread. This is maturity. The immature Christian, the Christian who hasn't grown very far, is one who sees the gift to be far bigger than the giver and far more important.

Give me the gift and I don't care about you. I don't care about your name. I don't care about your will.

I don't care about your kingdom. I don't care about other people. Just give me what I'm asking for.

Isn't there a lot of that in us, my friend? Secondly, not only is the reality of the petitioner's relationship to God and of his sincerity made evident by this plea for daily bread, but his frugality points in the same direction. Now notice, he makes no extravagant demands of God. Jesus taught him to ask for his daily bread.

Daily bread. He may not ask for jam on the bread. He asked for bread.

Our God is such that he generally put something on it. But the spiritual man is a man who is content with having his needs supplied and having his needs supplied, he will bless the Lord at all times and his praise will continually be in his mouth. You see, there's an awful twist of sin that has been brought in every one of our hearts.

You must be as concerned for bread for your brother as you are for bread for yourself. Who said the Lord's prayer was child's play? Oh, the underlying psychology, the underlying spirituality, oh, the profundity of this. Give us our daily bread that we may share together what we have.

Here, surely, the spirit of the Father and of the Son is evident. Grace is reflected in this plea as much as in the more obvious expressions of worship and fidelity in the opening words of the prayer. My dear friends, if ever we need a divine help, it is really to pray this prayer.

It is really to pray it. I have said it before by way of explanation why we do not use it oftener in the service. It's the most exquisitely beautiful prayer that was ever penned or published.

Of that there can be no doubt. But of the capacity of a congregation of mixed men and women, carnal and spiritual, sometimes believers and unbelievers, willy-nilly to pray these words, I have serious questions. Can you pray this sincerely? Are you contented with daily bread? Will you not grumble if there's not something more than bread? And the bread you get, do you look upon it as something to be shared with all those who with you say, Our Father, from whom the bread must come? O Spirit of God, teach me to pray this prayer and to live it.

Because in the learning of this, I believe, is the secret of Christian maturity. As that is reflected in the epistles, and as it is embodied in the one and only perfect life that ever there was, namely that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And to Him, therefore, we ascribe all honor and glory and praise forever and ever.

Amen. Let us pray. Most merciful God, we are the unworthy students in your school, disciples in your flock.

We have enlisted, not knowing all that was involved. And though we have sat in class and have heard the teacher teaching many times, and have read the lessons over, forgive us, our Father, that we have not applied them more rigorously to our own lives. O Heavenly Lord, our God and our Father, teach us how to pray this particular petition, and lead us through the exercises of soul that are needful, in order to make us men and women of such a caliber.

We would dearly love to be able to pray aright. For the glory of your name. For the salvation of our own families.

For the transformation of our circumstances in accordance with your will. For the performance of our calling and the fulfillment thereof. O Lord, for a myriad reasons that are related to your praise, we would that we were able to pray this kind of prayer.

Teach us how to pray. And forgive our sins. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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