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Jesus On Prayer (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg talks about the importance of praying to God and doing His will. He stresses that while it is okay to work towards achieving our needs and desires, praying for them is equally important. Addressing God as "Father" is appropriate as it signifies a personal relationship with Him. Gregg emphasizes the significance of praising God and not treating it as a means to fulfill hidden agendas. Finally, Gregg stresses the importance of praying for God's mercy and protection from temptation.

Transcript

...from the children of men to invite Him to work. Therefore, prayer, as I said earlier, is not really a means of getting your way done. God isn't just making supernatural aid available to you to do your selfish thing and build your kingdom and fulfill your agendas.

Prayer is God's way of getting an invitation from us to do what He wants to do. And the Christian is supposed to be obsessed with this one thing, the will of God, not one's own will. And we know we can't do the will of God ourselves without His assistance.

Jesus said, without Me, you can do nothing. Furthermore, if it was just a matter of us trying to establish righteousness in our nation, without the help of God, the prospects are pretty dim. We're outnumbered, for one thing.

We're way outnumbered. The heathen outnumber the Christians by a pretty fair margin. And the idea of seeking to see God's will done on earth by our human efforts without God's intervention are dismal.

But, with God's intervention, the picture changes a great deal. And He intervenes by our invitation. So, things cannot be accomplished without prayer.

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain. Who built it? But, if you pray, then God does the building through us, through our prayers, in answer to our prayers, and through our efforts as well. He blesses our efforts as we pray for Him to do so as well.

The point is, though, that prayer is one of the means of getting the will of God done in

the earth. Now, in this sense, I said it's one of the means. What is the other means of getting God's will done in the earth besides prayer? Our efforts.

Our labors. Doing the will of God. And we need to have a clear picture in our minds of what the relationship is between work and prayer.

That is, our own labors for righteousness and prayer. As I understand it, and I qualify it that way because it's possible I don't understand it correctly, but it occurs to me from my understanding of the teaching of prayer in Scripture, God expects us to do as much as we can with His assistance, and then what can't be done through us, He can do in spite of us or beyond us as we pray for it. For example, when I say, give me this day my daily bread in prayer, it is not assumed that God is going to drop manna on my lawn or that the cupboards are going to be supernaturally filled with food.

As I pray for daily bread, there is the expectation, of course, that I will go out and do what I am expected to do, that there are some things in my power that God has put in my power which He expects me to responsibly practice. So, I should either go out and work, or I should at least occupy myself with some profitable thing and expect God to provide through some kind of natural means for the most part. It's usually through people that He provides anyway, either an employer or someone giving a gift or whatever.

The point is, though, that when I say, give me my daily bread, I'm not asking for a miracle directly, unless a miracle is the only way it can happen. I mean, if I'm starving out in the wilderness and there's no way for me to get food, and I pray for my daily bread, I may be asking for Him to send ravens to bring me food like He did Elijah. And I could expect that He could do that.

But for the most part, if there's something I can do, I'm expected to do that part and expect Him to do the part that I can't do. To trust God for everything doesn't mean that I don't have any responsibilities. But I am to, by two means, change the world.

By my efforts, that is my works, my labors, and my prayers. Now both, of course, have to be energized by God or else they're going to be fruitless. Even my works have to be energized by the Spirit of God.

Without Him, I can't do anything. But even after I've done all that I can through Him, there's still more that needs to be done that I can't do. I can try to reconcile parties that are hostile to each other and I can say all the conciliatory things and I can do everything I can.

But after I've said everything I have to say, there's still more work that needs to be done. It may be that they're resisting me and all I can do then is pray. And God can do what I can't do.

But the two ways, the two things available to us, the two resources for getting the will of God done in the earth are our efforts and our prayers. And our efforts and our prayers should not be seen as opposites, but as two sides of a coin. What I can do, I'm expected to.

What I can't do, I call on God to do. Now, I say this partly mindful of another misunderstanding I've heard people report to having about prayer. I've heard a couple of times in my life people say, well, I would never pray for anything for myself.

I would never pray for such a thing as a car. I remember someone saying that their car was broken down and they don't know how they're going to afford to repair it and they need a car desperately and I said, well, have you prayed about it? They said, oh, I'd never ask God to get me a car. I think, well, why not, to be safe? I don't understand that.

I don't understand the mentality that says I would never ask God for something for myself. Because the way I understand it, if it is the will of God for me to have a thing, I should be willing to work for it and pray for it. Because whatever is the will of God, I shouldn't be ashamed to pray for it.

On the other hand, if it's not the will of God for me to have a thing, I shouldn't either pray for it nor work for it. You know, the funny thing is, the very person who said, I would never ask God to help me get a car, to provide a car, that person buys cars, that person goes out and works at a job and earns money and uses his money to buy a car. In other words, he'll acquire a car through his works but not through his prayers.

Somehow there's a dichotomy in his mind that some things are appropriate to work for but inappropriate to pray for. And as I said, there's only one thing that should be our motivator in both work and prayers. What does God want? And if I know what God wants or have a good opinion, have a good reason to believe I know what God wants, then all my works and my prayers should be directed toward that.

If that includes having a car, if it includes having a stereo, if it includes having a home, if it includes having new shoes or whatever, I should be neither ashamed to work toward that end nor pray for it. On the other hand, if I wouldn't pray for it because I really don't believe it's the will of God for me to have it, it would be kind of embarrassing. I realize it's kind of a selfish request and I really shouldn't ask for it, then I shouldn't work for it any other way either.

There's people who know that certain things they want are so selfish they wouldn't dream of asking for them from God, but they still make it their goal to obtain them. And that seems strange to me. If it's not the will of God for you to have it, then you shouldn't work for it either or pray for it.

So, in answer to the question, if the father knows what I have need of before I even ask

him why I ask, there are several things. It's a dynamic of relationships that communication is necessary. It's a dynamic of family life that children are to depend and express dependency on their fathers to ask for what they need because children need things and the fathers are charged with their provision.

It is also the case, of course, that there is a sense in which God has given man the unique position of being the one, the race, the human race is in charge of the earth, to invite God's activity in the world. And that's what prayer is. We invite God to do what he wants.

And the implication is he wouldn't do it if we didn't ask. James says you have not because you asked not. Now, the implication is that if you had asked, you would have it.

There are some things that God would like to give you. There are some things God would like to do. There are some things that are the will of God that don't get done because you didn't ask for it, because you didn't pray.

And therefore, there's this very strong suggestion there that some things God would like to see done, either he cannot or will not do without our first inviting him, without our asking him to do his will in the earth. And therefore, the first petition, of course, has to do with God's will being done. Now, let's look at the prayer itself.

Our Father in Heaven. Now, the Jews had many names by which they could address God. I heard somewhere that the Talmud had, oh, 30 or more different names that were considered to be appropriate for speaking to God.

And one authority said, I didn't look this up in the primary documents, I got it second hand, but one authority said that the name Father wasn't even on the list. Now, there is, in the Old Testament, some little support for the idea that the Jews saw God as their Father. David said in Psalm 103, like a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

Obviously, comparing God to a father. In Isaiah, a few times, Isaiah said, Lord, we are your children, you are our Father, meaning Israel was his children and God was the Father of the nation. But, for the most part, people, the Jews, didn't think of God in a familiar sort of a way, like Jesus spoke of him.

Remember how it offended them when Jesus said, my Father works until now, and I work, in John 5, 17. They took up stones to stone him, not only because he broke the Sabbath, but because he called God his Father. How dare you speak that way about God? That's much too familiar.

And yet, Jesus said, when you pray, say our Father. It's quite clear that he doesn't want us to think of God in terms other than those which encourage us to see God as being on our side, being closely concerned about our needs, and willing to come to our aid, just

like a father is. Now, Father is not God's name.

We sometimes get the impression that it may be, because we know the Trinity to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We think of the Holy Spirit, and the Son, and the Father to be names of individuals. Those are simply descriptions.

God is a Father. When we read of God the Father, it's not giving his name. His name isn't God the Father.

His name is God, and he is a Father. He's described as our Father. Jesus is never in the Bible called God the Son, but he is God.

We call him the Son because that's the kind of relationship he bears to the Father. These are relational terms. They're not titles or names.

God is our Father. We call him that not because that's his name. We call him that because that's the relationship that we bear to him.

We are his children. And so Jesus said, when you pray, say, Our Father. Now, what about praying to Jesus? It's very common for Christians to pray to Jesus.

I want to say that I don't think that can be faulted entirely, biblically speaking. But there is not much encouragement in the Bible to pray to Jesus. In fact, it would appear that Jesus never urged people to pray to him, but always urged them to pray to the Father.

When you pray, we could read whenever you pray. I mean, all the times you pray, you can follow this model that he gives. And the model addresses God as Father.

It doesn't address him as Jesus. Now, the Father and Jesus are separate individuals, as Jesus made clear when he was on earth. He said, The Father is greater than I. I didn't come to glorify myself, but to glorify the Father.

Obviously, he made a distinction between himself and the Father. And who do you pray to? Well, he always said to pray to the Father, not to himself. Now, a lot of people are a little shy about that.

A lot of people think of the Father as the God of the Old Testament, and Jesus as the God of the New Testament, forgetting that in the New Testament it was God the Father who loved the world so much that he sent his only begotten son. It was not Jesus who came up with the idea of coming to earth to save us. It was the Father's idea, because of God's love for us.

People have a slanderous opinion about the Father in some cases, because they misunderstand the Old Testament and think of God in the Old Testament as a scary God. He's not scary, unless you're on his bad side. David wasn't scared of God.

I'm not sure there's a thing called the fear of God, but that obviously, those of us who are instructed scripturally know that the fear of God doesn't mean that we're scared of God. It means that we're in awe of God, and we have a healthy respect for the danger of getting on his wrong side. But as long as we're not on his wrong side, there's no emotion of fear that is a part of our life.

In fact, perfect love casts out such fear. If our love for God is perfect, then we will not be doing anything that will incur his wrath, and there will be no fear. The fear of God is the fear of the potential of getting God angry at you by doing the wrong thing, and therefore, by the fear of God, men depart from evil, it says in the Proverbs.

Well, the point I'm making is that Jesus didn't encourage us to dread our approach to God, but to come as readily to God as a child comes to a father, and with the same expectations of acceptance from him as a child expects to have from his father when he comes to him. Now, I realize that we live in a day where a lot of people accuse their fathers of a lot of abuse, and no doubt there are some abusive fathers out there. I don't know if it's as common as the reports.

It's become kind of faddish to say that your father abused you as your child and so forth, and no doubt a lot of people are coming out and saying such things who've never had such experiences. In fact, some of them are only remembering it after it's fed to their mind by a psychologist. They live their entire lives without remembering any abuse until the psychologist somehow put the memory there.

And now you get the impression that half the fathers in the world are abusing their kids. I seriously doubt that the figure is anywhere close to what the news media would suggest, but we know there are some abusive fathers, and if that's true, if a person has an abusive father, it does create a bit of a problem in that Jesus used the term father for God in order to encourage us to have a picture of God as being like our earthly father. I mean, it is a metaphor.

God didn't beget us in the way he begat Jesus. You have an earthly father who did that. God is not your literal father in that sense.

He was Jesus' literal father in that sense because Jesus had no earthly father. God made Jesus' mother conceive, and that isn't the case with you. So for you to call God father is in some sense a metaphor, but what's the purpose of it? It's that you might recognize that God is like a father.

Now, if your father was not a particularly good example of a father, it might momentarily create some difficulties in your relationship with God. I don't make such a big deal of this as most Christian psychologists do. I've heard Christian psychologists say, if your earthly father is no good, then you're going to have a bad relationship with God.

I don't agree with that. David said in Psalm 27, if my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. So it didn't make him lose faith in God if he saw imperfection in his parents.

Rejection from his parents did not translate into ipso facto sense of rejection from God. Because even people who have poor fathers often know instinctively what a good father should be like. They see other fathers who aren't bad fathers.

I mean, there is a certain normativeness of good, concerned fatherhood. And the father who doesn't take care of his children and who abuses his children is the exception. Therefore, even people who have bad fathers still know something about what fathers ought to be because there's enough models around.

And therefore, I don't think people have to have an ongoing problem in their relationship with God just because Jesus encouraged us to think of him as a father and we happen to have a father that we didn't relate well with. I reject that notion that you're doomed to have a bad relationship with God if you had a poor relationship with your father. Jesus knew that most people, probably all people, have a good idea of what a good father is like.

And what a good father is like is what God is like. And Jesus made many comparisons of God to earthly fathers in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, 17 times in these three chapters of Matthew, Jesus referred to God as father, sometimes directly making an analogy of earthly fathers to God.

And that's what he wants us to do here. He wants us, our approach to God, to be one of confidence that God is like a father. He cares about you as much as you care about yourself.

He has more wisdom than you have about what's good for you, but he cares for your happiness as much as you do. And he is as eager to hear from you and to relate with you as a father is to his own son or daughter. And therefore, Jesus encourages us to pray to the Father.

Now, praying to Jesus, I said, is not encouraged here. There are two prayers in the Bible, I believe, directed to Jesus, that is, after his ascension. One was that of Stephen when he was being stoned.

He saw heaven open, he saw Jesus, and he said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And the other is the last prayer in the Bible at the end of Revelation. John said, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

After the ascension of Christ, these are the only two biblical prayers directed to Jesus in the Bible after his ascension. Of course, when he was on earth, his disciples asked him many things. But that's a little different than, I mean, that's not really parallel to our

prayer life.

I mean, they were with Jesus. And also when Stephen and John, in the book of Revelation, and Stephen when he was being stoned, when they prayed to Jesus, they too were looking at Jesus. They saw visions of Christ, and it was on those occasions that they spoke thus to him.

When Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, he said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. When John saw Jesus on the island of Patmos, he said, come quickly, Jesus. But on occasions where people were not looking right at Jesus, that is, visibly seeing him, we have no precedent in the Bible for speaking to Jesus in prayer.

Now, that may be a great disappointment to some. And again, I don't think that Jesus objects to being spoken to. I don't think that's a problem.

But he didn't come to bring us to himself so much as to bring us to the Father. In John 14.6, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me.

He didn't talk about being the place we were going. He was the way there. Where we were going was to the Father.

The problem that Jesus came to remedy was that man was alienated from God, and God wanted reconciliation. And God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Not to Christ, but to himself in Christ.

Now, regardless of how our shortage of understanding of the nature of the Trinity hangs us up here, it remains the case that Jesus always taught us to seek to relate directly to the Father. And that's what he came here to do, to help us to do that again. If you look at John chapter 16, Jesus was soon to go away from his disciples.

And he was preparing them for that. And in verse 25, John 16.25, Jesus said, But these things I have spoken to you in figurative language, but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray to the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from God.

Now, Jesus says, in that day you will not ask me anything. You will ask the Father in my name. And he says, I'm not going to go ask the Father for you, you don't need me to do that.

You just, he loves you, you talk to him directly. Now, doesn't the Bible say that Jesus is the mediator between God and man? Yes, it does, but that doesn't mean he goes to God instead of you. He goes with you.

He gives you access to God. He is the one on whose merits you come before the Father. But it is the Father to whom you come, through Christ.

And Jesus is a mediator between the Father and you. But Jesus said, I'm not going to go talk to the Father about it, for you talk to him. The Father loves you.

Don't ask me, ask him. You see, prayer in the teaching of Jesus always was directed to the Father. In fact, on the occasion when he said, pray like this, in both places, in Luke and in Matthew, he says, when you pray, pray like this, our Father.

So obviously, praying to the Father is the norm. Now, you might say, but I've prayed to Jesus, and it seems like my prayers have been answered. I don't doubt it.

I don't doubt that Jesus hears prayers and can answer prayers. But all I'm saying is that he didn't encourage us to pray that way. I'm not saying it's a sin to pray to Jesus, but if I, let's put it this way.

When you pray, you really want to get an answer. And if you really want to get an answer, you'll be careful to want to pray the way you're taught to pray by Jesus. I mean, if you're not too concerned about getting an answer, you can pray any way you want.

But if you really want God to hear, you really want to make sure you're praying according to the way he instructed you to pray. And since he instructed us to pray to the Father, and he never instructed us to pray otherwise, in fact, he even specified, you're not going to ask me, you're going to ask the Father. It seems to me that praying to the Father is the thing that is consistently taught by Jesus to do.

By the way, the prayers of Paul are not directed to Jesus, but they're directed to the Father. I'm thinking of one in particular, well, in the book of Acts, for example. Now, this isn't Paul, of course, at this point.

But in Acts chapter 4, the disciples, Peter and John, are beaten by the Sanhedrin. They're sent on their way with a threat. And it says in verse 24, Acts 4, 24, So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, now is this Lord, Lord Father or Lord Jesus? Read on.

Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the mouth of your servant David have said, then he quotes Psalm 2, Then verse 27, For truly against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. Now, who's being addressed here? Not Jesus. The Lord who's being addressed has a holy servant named Jesus.

So it is not Jesus that they're addressing in prayer, they're addressing the Father. They talk about Jesus to Him, but they aren't talking to Jesus in their prayer. It would be much more natural in modern Christian circles to address to Jesus our prayers, but that's not

necessarily the biblical thing we're encouraged to do.

I'm looking real quickly, I don't know if I'll find it real quickly, for a prayer of Paul found in Ephesians chapter, I thought it's in chapter 4 or 5, and I'm sorry that I don't have it more readily at hand. Paul says, Therefore I bow my knee to the Father. And I think it's in chapter 4, but it may be in chapter 5. It's been a while since I taught Ephesians, so I'm not that up to date on where things are in it.

Oh, maybe you'll find it. It starts out with, For this cause. Well, if we don't find it, that's okay.

I just wanted to point out that one of Paul's prayers, Oh, is it in chapter 3? No wonder I didn't find it. Okay, there it is. Thank you.

Ephesians 3, 14. Thank you very much. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man.

You see, the prayers of Paul, the prayers of Peter and John, are directed to the Father. I wonder why. Maybe because that's how Jesus said they should pray.

To the Father. So, no matter how much more comfortable it may seem for some Christians to pray to Jesus, to pray like that may be no sin, but it is not the way we are taught by Jesus to pray. And so he says, when you pray, say, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Now, the expression, hallowed be your name, is probably, you know, it may be a petition. It may be saying, let it happen that your name will be hallowed. That is revered, held in reverence, treated as holy.

In which case, it's an actual petition that the people in the world who do not currently revere God will begin to do so. That God will bring about a circumstance on earth where his name receives proper reverence. That would require a tremendous amount of change from the present circumstances, since his name is not currently revered or hallowed, but it would be a worthy subject of prayer, or object of prayer.

However, it is also possible that it is simply a term of respect, saying that I desire to revere your name. I am coming to you in reverence. A little bit like when people would approach a king in biblical times.

They would give something like, Oh, king, live forever. In fact, that's very common in the Old Testament. You find people coming to the king saying, Oh, king, live forever.

Or something like that. Or, you know, long live the king, or hail to the king. I mean, these

were typical forms of address to a king.

You didn't just talk to a king like anyone else. You basically expressed your respect in one way or another. Just like even in a court of law, you don't speak to the judge in a normal way.

You call him, what do you call him, your honor. Or when speaking to a king, your majesty, or whatever. It's as if you're coming to God in a familiar way, because he's your father, but still with reverence.

Not overly familiar. Not in the sense that you and he are equals. Not so familiar that you lose all sense of awe and reverence and hallowing of his name.

I think reverence is a very important missing element in much of Christian life today and much of Christian prayers. Whether this second line, hallowed be your name, is intended to be simply an expression of reverence or an actual petition that God would be revered worldwide, may be arguable until the Lord comes, and we may never know who had the right argument. But one thing it very much illustrates is that our prayers should be in a tone of reverence.

Not a tone of trepidation and dread, because he's our father. But in a tone of awe and respect, as fathers themselves used to be respected by their sons. There is sometimes a great lack of that in our present culture.

But when we say we are to approach God as a father, perhaps more in the old-fashioned sense, where sons respected their fathers and always said, Sir, when they were told to do something, rather than the way that's much more typical now of these kind of authority-free, egalitarian homes, where no one has any more honor or respect than anyone else. In the old times, the father had a revered place in the home. And therefore, our prayers to God are to be as to a father, but in the old-fashioned sense of the word, a father.

That the father is respected and hallowed, revered and held in awe and esteem, but still recognized as having fatherly concern and fatherly interest and love for the child. Yes, Jimmy? Yeah, we sing to Christ. You know, now there is a thing.

Is praise and worship the same as prayers? There is a difference. Because in the Book of Revelation, the inhabitants of heaven address their prayers to Him that sits on the throne and to the Lamb. But they're not prayers so much as they are praises.

It's like they're ascribing glory and honor and dominion and power and majesty and those kinds of things to both the Father and the Son. And the reference to Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb together happens several times in the Book of Revelation, not just once or twice. But in the majority of the times when we see the people in heaven praising and worshiping God, the praise is directed toward God and toward Jesus.

But that's a little different than prayer for some reason. I mean, we're taught one way about prayer. And it's modeled, too, in the New Testament, the way that we're taught.

But praise, people worshiped Jesus when He was on the earth and He didn't forbid that. And I believe that Christians still worship Jesus since then, too. I think the worship of Jesus, there's much Biblical precedent for.

It's praying to Jesus that isn't necessarily modeled or taught in the Scripture. That's a good point because there is obviously some likeness between prayer and praise, but there's some essential distinction, too. And whatever that distinction is, it seemingly makes it appropriate to praise Jesus, but not quite in the same sense appropriate to pray to Him.

At least that's not what we're encouraged to do Biblically. About hallowing the name of Jehovah. Yeah, the Jehovah's Witnesses make a big issue about the name Jehovah.

In fact, when they pray, they don't pray Father, they pray Jehovah. And they feel that if you don't know the name Jehovah, if you don't use the name Jehovah when addressing God, that, well, you're not really showing proper respect. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses actually say, if you don't call Him by name, that is, when you pray, if you don't say Jehovah, how is He going to know you're talking to Him? I mean, if I walk into this room and say, hey, but don't name anyone, no one's going to know I'm talking to them.

So they actually say this. I've actually had them say this to me many times. You know, you've got to pray.

What's that? Yeah, some people say that about demons as well, that you don't call them by name. But I think that's, I mean, I think it's silly to say, if you don't call God by name, how is He going to know who you're talking to? He knows your heart, you know. The point is, though, hallowed be thy name isn't so much a reference to His handle, you know, the title or name.

We think of a name as, you know, the word that's on our birth certificate that we are addressed by. In Hebrew thinking, the name suggests the whole person, the whole person's status, their authority, their dignity, their identity. And to say that, well, many times the Bible says that we need to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, why not just believe in Jesus Christ? You know, what does it mean to believe on His name? Well, I think the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is just a Hebraic way of saying Jesus Himself. And when you say, hallowed be thy name, it's another way of saying just, hallowed be you, you know. The Jehovah's Witnesses being much more tending to take the word name the way we do in the West in modern times, just the title by which someone is called, their label, they feel that you have to revere the actual name, the word, Jehovah.

But to say, hallowed be thy name, isn't necessarily a reference to His personal name. God has several personal names in the Bible. He's called by many names, not just Jehovah.

He's called by that and several others. But no particular name is in view here so much as His person, His dignity and His, who He is, is to be revered, I think. Now, the first petition, there are several petitions in this prayer, but the first one is, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, by the way, I can preach a long time on this prayer, but I don't have time to do that, so I'm going to have to just summarize. One thing that we see here is that our first concern in prayer is not our wishes, but His. Prayer, again, as I said, is not really a magic wand to get our will done.

It's not an open sesame to every agenda that we have. It is inviting God and urging God to do on earth what He wants to do and what He's already doing in heaven. That such things as are already true in heaven may become realities on earth.

To tell you the truth, in my mind, I link this with Jesus' statement that whatsoever things you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever things you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Jesus said that twice, once in Matthew 16 and once in Matthew 18. And it suggests that the disciples were involved in the process of bringing to pass on earth things that were already realities in heaven.

That which you bind on earth is already bound in heaven. That which you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven. Now, it's loosed in heaven, but it won't get loosed on earth unless you loose it.

It's bound in heaven, but it won't be bound on earth unless you bind it, is what is seemingly implied by those statements. And while many people apply that to demonic things, you know, binding demons and stuff, Jesus doesn't apply it that way in his statement. It's more a generic statement that what God has already established in heaven is ours to bring into reality on earth, but not alone, but through prayer and our efforts.

And so the first concern of our prayer is toward this end, that God's will would be done on earth in the way it already is in heaven, and that his kingdom would come. Now, there's a sense in which his kingdom has already come, and Jesus made that clear. He said the kingdom of God is already in your midst.

But there's another sense in which it's not yet come. The kingdom of God, Jesus says, is like a mustard seed. It starts out small, it grows into a great plant, eventually it shelters all kinds of birds.

It's like leaven in a lump, a little pinch of it's put in a lump of dough, and then it

permeates the whole lump. In other words, the kingdom of God is a growing concern. It began with Jesus.

He established it as a small concern, I mean a small little thing. And it began to grow with the evangelistic mission of the church. It began to grow, and it's still growing, but it has yet to be consummated.

Although the kingdom is present, it is not present in its final consummate state. And so to pray, your kingdom come, is to ask God to continue to bring about the advance of his kingdom, and the growth of his kingdom, and ultimately the consummation of his kingdom. And that, of course, when it is consummated, his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So those two things are kind of the same thing. Your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven are two ways of saying the same thing. Because that's what his will is, is that his kingdom would come and cover the whole earth.

Then come petitions that have to do with our needs. Surprisingly, the first one is not a spiritual one. One might think that the first thing you should pray for when you get around to praying for yourself is for forgiveness of sins, or for deliverance from temptation.

And those things are included, but the first thing mentioned is daily bread. Which, maybe if it tells us nothing else, tells us that there's nothing mundane or carnal about asking for things necessary for physical life. The body is not evil and the spirit good.

The body and the spirit are both the Lord's, and he's as concerned about the well-being of the whole man as we are. If we die, well, of course, if we die in his will, that's all right. But if it's not his will for us to die, then we need to be fed.

And for him to sustain our life as long as he wants us to breathe and live on this earth is not a selfish request. All masters want their servants to live and provide food and shelter and clothing for them. That's what masters do for their servants.

That's what fathers do for their children. And for a child to ask for that which he needs is no selfish thing. Now, notice it's not a big request.

It's not saying, please make me rich. It's saying, give me my daily bread. That is, the bread I need for today.

God gave the Israelites a daily allotment of bread each day in the wilderness, the manna. And they were not capable of preserving it overnight, except in the case of the Sabbath, where God supernaturally preserved it, but in most cases, if they tried to store up manna, they would find it putrid the next morning, and they'd learn their lesson, they wouldn't store it up again. And God enforced upon them the need to trust him every day

for new bread.

And that seems to be something that Christians not necessarily are required to do, that is, to have only one day's bread at a time available to them. But it is what we're entitled to pray for. All we really need is the bread we need now.

Tomorrow we'll need more, but we don't need more now, we just need what we need now. And Jesus tells us that we can pray for what we need, but let's be realistic about what we need. What we need and what we crave carnally are different things.

To desire food for life is a worthy thing to desire, because your life is devoted to God. The sustenance of your life is a godly matter. It keeps his servants on the field.

And that would not only go for food, but shelter or clothing or whatever else is necessary, anything necessary for healing, or anything else that's for your physical well-being. Now, that doesn't mean he's always going to say yes to you, because there does come a time when he wants you to die. Everyone dies sometime.

And it may be as well through sickness or through injury or through exposure. There are Christians who've died in prison from freezing cold, or there are Christians who've died in other situations, died of starvation out in the desert or something. Was God unfaithful to these? No.

God's promise is that he will keep us alive as long as he wants us alive. And as long as he wants us alive, it's appropriate for us to ask for and expect food, clothing, and the necessary things, even healing of deadly diseases, such as are necessary for us to live. But if he doesn't grant them, it simply is his way of saying, it's time, it's time for you to go.

And he's not obligated to keep you alive forever in this body, but there's certainly no shamefulness in asking for your daily food or for other necessary things. Verse 12, forgive us our debts, probably meaning our debt to God, which is our debt is to obey him completely. And since we haven't done so, we're indebted.

We've sinned. As we forgive our debtors, those who are indebted to us, those who've sinned against us. Now, he amplifies on that, of course, in verses 14 and 15.

We don't have time to go into that in detail. It'll come up again and again in the teaching of Jesus, the need for us to forgive others. It came up a bit when we were talking about, blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy in the Beatitudes.

If you don't forgive others, God won't forgive you. If you do forgive others, God will forgive you. It's an oft-repeated principle of Scripture, and Jesus is the one who taught it.

So it's appropriate for us to pray, God, forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who've

sinned against us. Now, it seems insane, when Jesus prays like this, that he is only allowing us to pray for forgiveness at the same level that we practice it. We're not supposed to pray, God, now I haven't quite forgiven this person, but please forgive me anyway.

He's saying, God, I want you to forgive me to the same extent that I forgive others. I'm not entitled to ask for more. Now, on this point, Jesus said, in teaching on prayer elsewhere, in Mark 11, I think it's verse 24 or 25, Mark 11, he said, when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Heavenly Father may forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11, I think it's 24 or 25. And therefore, not only here, but elsewhere, Jesus linked the need to forgive others with your prayer life. Prayer should be, among other things, a time when you are checking your own heart and seeing if you have any grudges that would keep God from honoring your requests and from forgiving you.

And if we have, in our own hearts, forgiven others, then we can confidently ask God to forgive us as well. Why? Because if I have forgiven someone else, I can't expect God to be less gracious than I. God's the epitome of grace and mercy. If I have enough mercy to forgive someone else, I can certainly expect God will have enough to forgive me.

He's not less merciful than I am. And therefore, I can, by my forgiving others, appeal to that. And say, God, I have shown mercy, now I need to obtain mercy.

And God has promised that the merciful shall obtain mercy. So I can pray, forgive me for my sins, just as I have forgiven those who have sinned against me. And verse 13, do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Just as verse 10, I think, said sort of the same thing twice. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth. Those are two different ways of saying the same thing.

Here, I think, this is two ways of saying the same thing. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the tempter, the evil one. Now, the first clause is confusing if taken by itself.

Lead us not into temptation. Doesn't the Bible suggest that God doesn't lead us into temptation? Let no man say when he is tempted, I'm tempted of God, James 1 says. For God does not tempt any man with evil.

So why would we ever, ever have to ask God not to lead us into temptation? Well, we have to understand the whole thought. The idea is, don't lead us into the situation where we are stuck in temptation, but lead us out from it. Lead us out of it, deliver us from the tempter, is what it's all about.

Now, it's one thing to be led into temptation, it's another thing to be led safely through

temptation. The prayer is, essentially, to paraphrase, I think we could say it like this. Don't just lead me in, you know, at the mercy of the tempter, but lead me through it.

Lead me beyond it. Don't just lead me into it and abandon me there, but lead me through temptation and deliver me out of it. And while it may seem that that first clause is a bit strange sounding to our ears, it is nonetheless, apparently, the meaning when you consider the second clause.

The idea is that we are to pray to be delivered from temptation. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. So, he indicated that they could expect not to fall into temptation if they prayed about it.

And the first thing to consider, if you happen to be falling frequently into temptation, is ask, have I prayed about this? Have I asked to be delivered from it? If you have and you're still falling, there may be more necessary on your part in terms of warfare and fighting the good fight. But until you've prayed, you haven't done the first thing you're instructed to do yet. And the last part of this prayer, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, is not found in some manuscripts.

But it is found in the Old Testament. Now, that doesn't mean Jesus included it in his model prayer. The Alexandrian manuscripts don't have it.

But I would say that raises the question as to whether Jesus included it or not. But whether Jesus included it or not, it is an appropriate way of praying, biblically speaking. David prayed that way in 1 Chronicles 29.11. And there's another prayer in 2 Chronicles 20.6. Let me just read those for you.

1 Chronicles 29.11. David said, So, even though we don't have all the manuscripts,