
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: THE LORD'S PRAYER

LECTURE 6: GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Dr. Gerald R. Procee

Presented in 14 Lectures called
THE BEAUTY OF PRAYER

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Lecture 6

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

In this series on the Beauty of Prayer, we are considering the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and now then we come to the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now it's very noteworthy that in the second part of the Lord's Prayer, in which we focus upon our own personal needs, the Lord Jesus starts off by addressing our physical needs. The Lord does not start with the soul. When our personal needs are to be addressed, He does not start with forgiveness of sins, but He commences with the needs of our body because the Lord knows that we need food and drink and that we have many physical needs. The Lord is not overly spiritual. He does not want us to first focus on forgiveness of sins, on spiritual afflictions and struggles and just ignore the needs of the body.

No, it's the other way around. The Lord causes us first to consider the physical needs of our body, for how can you speak to a hungry man about his soul? How can you address a sick person about salvation? The man is sick, or that man is hungry. A person can have cramps because of hunger. He first needs food, or he first needs medical treatment and to be delivered from pain that he has. Then you can speak to Him about the true and the real needs of a person, and these needs are then the spiritual needs.

And the Lord Jesus is showing this to us. This sequence, when He first lets us pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," because this is also a recognition of the fact that God gives us our daily food. It's not the earth that gives us our food. It is the Lord. He causes the golden grain to grow upon the fields. It's the Lord Who gives fertility to the soil and the plants. He is the Creator and the Sustainer of everything that lives, so the Lord Jesus teaches us to confess this. We confess that God gives us our daily food by asking and praying to Him, "Give us this day our daily bread." That's honoring to God for we realize and confess that it is He Who gives us everything we need. We are dependent upon Him.

Now in this little petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," there are various matters, various aspects we wish to highlight. Let us look first at that matter that the Lord speaks of daily bread. He teaches us to pray for the needs of this one day, the day we are now in, today, so not tomorrow, not next week or next year, but today. Every day has enough for its own cares. We do not know what will happen tomorrow or next year. We are to live every day, day by day.

Now that does not mean that we should not take care for the future. A person can study to get ahead in life, and we work and we plant and we sow seed in order to get a harvest in so many months. Proverbs 6:8 teaches us clearly that we are to take care for the future, that is making provisions when you have the opportunity. But still, we need to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Then there's something else in this fourth petition that we pray here, "Give us this day our daily bread." We mean our daily food. There are certain cultures in which they do not even eat bread. There are cultures in which they eat rice or in which they eat maize and other cultures, there they eat bread. When the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, He means that we should pray for our daily provisions, the daily food we need.

And in the days of Israel when the Lord Jesus ministered there, they would eat bread daily. Israel was a country where wheat would grow abundantly, and so the people would have as their daily food bread, and we are really considering here normal bread. When we speak about "Give us this day our daily bread," we are not speaking of a spiritual level of bread. We're not speaking of spiritual matters. We are speaking very concretely, practically, about our daily food, our daily bread that we need. And so, the Lord is focused here upon what we daily stand in need of. We see that He is caring, that He is considerate, that He is compassionate; and it is spiritual to understand that He takes care of our daily needs, that we recognize this and that it is very spiritual to consider that our day-by-day food comes from the Lord.

Again, we look at this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." This day, what does that mean? That means the day I am in today. I arise in the morning, and at night I go to bed. This is the day, this day that lies in front of us in the morning, and we can anticipate troubles or cares. This day can appear to be so fearful and full of cares and wants. There are people who wonder how they shall eat this day and what shall happen. There are people who are in danger, and still the Lord tells us to pray that God would take care of us this day.

And so, the Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morning, for the morning tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." God knows that we need His care. God knows that we are very limited. We are limited by our bodies. We cannot look into the future. Our understanding is very limited. We only know that today we have our needs, and what will happen tomorrow is uncertain; and we can bring these daily needs before the Lord.

That's what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-27, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"

We can be burdened by worries. We can be torturing ourselves by cares, but this is all too heavy a weight for us to bear. God does not load the ship of our life too heavily, but every day it is enough. Every day has its own cares, and we may trust that God will take care of us this day. "Give us this day our daily bread." The Lord does not want us to go to bed at night and to be worrying and lying awake because God is today present in your life, and tomorrow He will still be alive, and the day after tomorrow He will also be there then. God is always the same. He has always provided, and He shall continue to provide. And so, this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is a petition of faith, of trust.

We are called to pray for our daily needs, but at the same time, we must realize that the priority in our lives should nevertheless be upon God and His kingdom. That's why the Lord Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And these things are the cares and the needs of daily life. The Lord will provide. So, every day we are to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," but at the same time, we are yet to seek first the Lord and His kingdom and His righteousness. And so, the Lord wants us to live by trusting in Him. Trust, what a blessing to have a life of trust, that you will be amazed how God can provide because God is the living God. He knows what you need today and also tomorrow. He is a caring God.

To give an example of that, it happened in the 19th century to a man called George Müller. George Müller had arranged and organized various orphanages in the British city of Bristol, and every day he laid the needs of the orphan children before the Lord. He made his needs known throughout the country, but he never asked for funds. He only prayed, and continually the Lord gave him everything he stood in need of, and so he received many financial gifts from throughout England.

He gives an example of how the Lord in a special manner cared for him and for his children because it happened once at an orphanage in the morning that there was no milk available for the children, and they desperately needed milk. And then this God-fearing George Müller ordered all the children to sit at their breakfast

tables and to pray that God would give them their daily bread, and he led the children in prayer, and he thanked the Lord for the milk they were going to receive.

But at that moment he did not know where the milk would come from, and it happened right there and then that a milk cart broke down right in front of the orphanage. Its axle had broken. Repairs would take many hours. Therefore, the driver of the milk cart said to George Müller that he could have all the milk for his orphans because otherwise the milk would turn sour and it would have to be thrown away. And so the Lord in a remarkable way took care of the daily needs that day of the children in the orphanage. They received milk in answer to their prayers.

And so also in the Bible we find many examples of how the Lord cares for our daily needs. You will remember that every day the people of Israel received manna. Every morning it was there, bread from heaven. The Lord gave them water from the rock, and so the Lord spared them 40 years through a howling wilderness, and their shoes did not wear out. The Lord cared for them.

And so, the Lord can also care when there's a special need. You know that account of the widow who came to Elijah and in 2 Kings chapter 4 (verses 1–7), where this widow had no money left and her creditors had come and they were demanding money. They were threatening to sell her sons into slavery, and then the prophet Elisha told her to gather empty pots and pans in her house. And she had one little flask of oil left, and she could pour out from her flask oil into all those pots and pans. And so the Lord gave them abundantly what they stood in need of.

In the New Testament, we find also that repeatedly it says that we should come to the Lord with all the requests and needs. The apostle says in Philippians 4:6, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And in Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Daily, we must lay all our needs before the Lord, and that does not only refer to our food, but also to our clothing.

And the Lord knows that we need somewhere to live and somewhere to sleep. We need shelter. We need care for our children. We need protection along the roads. The Lord knows that we have emotional needs and that we have physical needs. At times, matters in life can be difficult and strenuous. The Lord knows exactly what we stand in need of. He can even provide you with a godly husband or a godly wife, for He knows all our needs.

Isn't it a great miracle that we may pray to God and ask Him to give us all we stand in need of? Because who are we? We have sinned against God. We have rebelled against Him. We deserve to be cast away and not to receive any blessing, and yet the Lord tells us to pray and to pour out our daily needs before Him and that He will supply our needs above our expectation, and so this is all merited by the Lord Jesus Christ. He earned the daily bread by His suffering, by His death on the cross, and by His obedience to God's laws.

And also, then consider how richly God can answer this prayer in our lives. Now some people may be rich. Others may have less money. There are also those who are poor, but is the Lord not able to provide abundantly even if we are less wealthy than others, even if we have very little? Then still God can provide. The Lord can give us food and shelter, clothing, warmth, and medical care. He can provide, maybe differently than we would like, but still He will give enough and sufficiently provide, and so we should be thankful for our daily food. We should not grumble at God's dealings in our life if we have less than another. Let us be joyful with what God gives and thank the Lord for all His care, and when we are together with our family at a meal, let that be something of a joyful event every day again, something of a celebration in our homes that God has so wonderfully provided for our daily needs.

And when we see all this goodness of the Lord, how He provides for us, how should this affect us? It should lead us to repentance. See all the riches of God's loving kindness and goodness. It should lead us, says Paul in Romans 2:4, to repentance. Consider what you deserve: nothing. You deserve judgment and affliction because of your sins. And observe what the Lord gives. He gives abundance and the fullness of blessings. And so, let us humble ourselves on account of all this goodness. The sins rise up to heaven, and the goodness of God and His daily care is showered down upon us. How good the Lord is. Then we say, "I am unworthy of the least of all Thy blessings." Then you pray, "Lord, lead me to genuine repentance that I would cleave to Thee and follow Him, this blessed God Who provides for me, and that I may love Thee and live with Thee forever."

Yes, the care of the Lord is so beautiful, He even knows what you need before you ask Him. He is perfectly aware of everything you need. He sees the tiny insect crawling on a leaf, and He knows what the great whales,

the great fish of the oceans need. He even hears the young ravens when they cry, the Bible tells us. He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. And how much more shall God's children receive daily care from the Lord.

He knows where you live. He knows your circumstances. He knows your name. He guides the sparrow to the spot where it finds tiny seeds waiting as its food. God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), and all the gold and silver belong to Him (Haggai 2:8). Shall He not provide for you? "Let, therefore," Hebrews 13:5 tells us, "your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, 'the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'"

And so, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and we are to pray this every day. Even if you have your cupboards full of food, even if you have a freezer full of food, we are still to pray, Give us this day our daily bread. We can have so much food, but then we cannot eat it. There are people who have enough food, but they cannot eat it, or the food does not do them any good. They get sick. You see, we are not dependent on food. We are dependent upon God. Rich people can be at times unable to eat. We are in all circumstances of life, whether we are poor or rich, fully dependent upon God. Without God's blessing, nothing shall avail us.

Like Psalm 127 tells us in the first verse, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." We need God's blessing upon all we do, also upon our eating and drinking. And so, we confess that the Lord is the fountain of all good; and all our labor, all our possessions will do us no good without God's blessing. And that's why we also pray before our meals, giving thanks to the Lord for the food and drink but also asking God to bless the food and drink, that it may be good for our bodies.

And so, when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we also thereby confess that God causes grain to grow. Who gives us the fields full of rice, full of wheat? Who gives the increase after the farmer has sown the seed? Who gives rain and sunshine? Who takes care that the crops stand aright and that the kernels of wheat or rice can be harvested? Who takes care that the crops are not thrust down flat on the earth and that they rot and cannot be harvested? It's all God's care. He cares for nature. The Lord gives the increase.

And so, when the Lord Jesus teaches us, "Give us this day our daily bread," it's also important to look at those words "us" and "our." We do not pray, "Give me my daily bread" but "Give us our daily bread." That shows that we pray this petition together with others. Others also pray for their daily bread, and we are actually praying along with them and, therefore, when we have abundance and we see others who have shortages, we must help them and provide. Then also, we may give from our abundance. And so, when we see others in need, the love of Christ must lead us to show concern for the other people. We must give liberally, even if it's a little sacrifice for us. Even if we have a little less, we should love our neighbor as ourselves. We should be characterized by care for the others and not to be selfish, and that's why we do not pray, "Give me" but "Give us our daily bread."

By nature, we are focused upon ourselves, and we are often our own idol. That's dreadful. We are by nature selfish people, but by the grace of God, Christ gives mercy that this idol self will be dethroned, and this sin of selfishness will be annihilated. That happens when the love of God enters your heart. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When He was in the wilderness, He did not think about bread, but He thought about God and His kingdom. And when the Lord Jesus was in remote, desolate places, He provided food for thousands of people, and He gave them bread and fish. The Lord was not indifferent because of the needs of people. He was very caring for them. He was not indifferent to their needs.

And so, let us also be content with what God gives us. That's another aspect, and that links up to the fact that we should not grumble and murmur, but we should be content with the food God gives us, and we should be grateful for the daily provisions in life. We should not desire riches, and we may also pray that we do not fall into poverty but that we may live in contentment with what God will provide us every day. That's how the Apostle Paul also lived. He was content to be in abundance and to suffer shortages because he knew that God would care for him under all circumstances.

And think of the care the Lord Jesus had for others. When the Lord Jesus hungered, He yet supplied others with bread. He thirsted, yet gave others to drink. He was weary; He gave others rest. He was in sorrow, yet He gave other people joy, and all along there was never a sigh of impatience. There was no murmuring in the Lord

Jesus. He was truly content, and love was beaming from His eyes. Compassion breathed throughout His every word. Let us follow His footsteps and so in this way learn to pray, "Give us today our daily bread."

And so, there is also in this petition a wonderful lesson that the Lord teaches us to make use of the means; the means, and that is bread or daily food. You see, the Lord is fully able to sustain our lives without food. Elijah once walked through the wilderness 40 days and nights without eating or drinking. Moses was 40 days and nights up on the mountain without eating or drinking. The Lord Jesus Himself was 40 days in the wilderness without food or drink. Who sustained their bodies? It was God who did it. God can sustain you even if you would not receive food or drink. He is the all-powerful God.

But now it pleases God to sustain us by means of food and drink and, therefore, we are to not pray, 'Lord, sustain us without means.' There can be circumstances that God will do that, but normally we are bound to the means. That's in physical needs, but it's also in our spiritual needs. In the matter of conversion in spiritual life, the Lord also tells us to make use of the means. In John 6:35 the Lord Jesus says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; he that believeth on me shall never thirst." We are called to humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing our sins, and to plead for His grace. We need the grace of the Holy Spirit to convict us and to lead us into communion with Christ.

The Lord makes use of the means. And what are the means in spiritual life? Those are the Word of God and prayer, and by making use of these means in spiritual matters, God will grant us grace. Do you desire communion with Christ? Make use of the means. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," John 5:39. And Matthew 7:7, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And Luke 11:13, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

The Lord binds us to the means in spiritual life and also in physical life until the day will come when our bodies and souls will be sustained without daily bread, for in the kingdom of heaven there will be no eating or drinking, but all will be sustained by the immediate presence of God. Let that be our aim. Thank you.