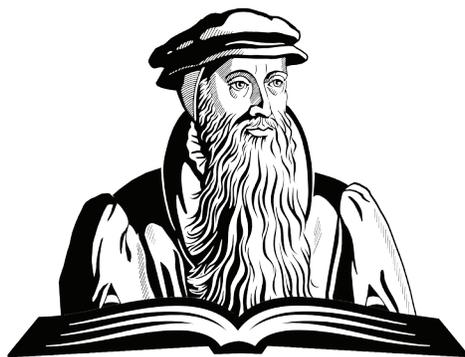

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: THE LORD'S PRAYER

14 LECTURES

Lecture Presenter: Gerald Procee PhD



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 1

INTRODUCTION: BIBLICAL FOUNDATION AND COURSE OUTLINE

Welcome to the series on the beauty of prayer. We wish in 14 lectures to meditate upon various aspects of prayer. We hope this will be a blessing to you, and we welcome you to follow along. In this first lecture, we wish to view an introduction and consider the biblical foundation of prayer. We also wish to give an outline of the following lectures.

Prayer, that is a most glorious and a most blessed, tender topic. It's a most thrilling matter because in prayer you speak to God, and God invites you even to speak to Him. God is in Heaven, and yet He can be so close to a person. The Bible teaches us that there is a living communion possible between the Almighty, Everlasting God and a weak human being, and that takes place in the way of prayer. That's such a miracle that the everlasting God Who dwells in inaccessible light and has all power in Heaven and upon earth—He is holy. He's majestic. He is all-powerful, glorious. He does not need anybody.—He is yet willing to enter into a living communion with corrupt mortal man.

Who of us has access to a king? Who of us can speak to a president? But, it is possible for us to speak to the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and this is a miracle, a rich privilege. It is grace. Because who are we? We are fallen creatures. We rebelled against God in Paradise. We have sinned against God by transgressing all of God's commandments, and therefore men deserve to be cast away forever into outer darkness. Yet, we see the miracle of God's grace as John tells us in chapter three verse 16 of his gospel, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Everlasting life", what does that actually mean? That means that you know God, that you love Him, that you live with Him, and everlasting life starts here already on earth. Here, in this life, people learn to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Holy Spirit fills them, and they start to live for and with the Lord Jesus. They walk in a new and godly life with the Lord. In this life, a person experiences peace of mind.

Then, a person is delivered from worries. He can rest upon the Almighty Arm of his Beloved. He rests upon God Almighty. God has become his Shepherd, and he will have no wants. That person may rest and trust in the loving care of God. He is purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ by His blood. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Heaven is his home. And now on earth, he is called to listen to the Word of God and to be led by that Word and by God's Holy Spirit. And he is called to live in a life of communion with God; that is a life of prayer.

But, too often, also God's children are tempted to neglect this personal prayer. Then, they can be too much focused upon this life and upon the difficulties of this life. At times, also, God's children, they can resemble a caterpillar who crawls over the dust of the earth, while they're called to be like a butterfly that flies up into the

sky and rejoices in the sunlight and in the beauty of nature. So, a child of God is called to fly up unto the Lord in prayer and to realize and enjoy the beauty that God has and that God gives. It is sheer grace that we may call upon God. It's a miracle that's recorded by Isaiah 57 verse 15, that the Lord God dwells in the high places, and yet He looks down upon the poor and the needy ones who tremble at His Word.

In prayer, a weak human being may be connected to the Almighty and great, glorious God. A personal relationship is experienced through the working of His Holy Spirit. So, when God's Spirit leads us in a life of communion with the Lord, He teaches us various lessons. One of the first lessons God's Spirit teaches a sinner is to have deep awe and reverence for the Lord. Then, that person receives an impression of the glory and majesty of God, and one sees that God must receive glory, and praise, and adoration. At the same time, the Holy Spirit Who has enlightened the eyes causes that person to see himself as a weak, sinful human being. He is full of corruption. Then, this corrupt sinner bows in adoration for this great God Who is so highly exalted. Then, one begs to be cleansed and washed in the blood of Christ, and even more to be led by God's Holy Spirit in a life of dedication and devotion to this good-doing, glorious God.

Then, it is experienced what King Solomon prayed in First Kings eight verse 23, "LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in Heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart." Then, a person learns to adore God for Who God is, not even so much for what God gives, but for Who He is.

Adoration, that is the highest form of prayer. It will come to full fruition in glory in Heaven. There, the Lord will receive all praise and adoration. Now on earth, prayer, supplications, those form the key to unlock the storehouse of God, because God can give so much more than we expect. He can work miracles. Strength can be renewed. Tears can be wiped away. In prayer, battles are fought and won. Struggles take place, and the way of the Lord is clearly seen. By means of prayer, people receive wisdom and know what to do in the midst of difficult questions and issues of daily life. It's through prayer that you receive light upon a certain path in life you have to go through. It's through prayer that you receive love and joy in the Lord, and a well-grounded hope.

So, the foremost task of a child of God in this life is to pray. Prayer is the occupation of a Christian. That's what the German reformer, Martin Luther, taught, that just like a cobbler mends shoes and just like a tailor fixes clothes, so a Christian prays. It is his trade. The Lord renews sinners that they become as prophets, kings, and priests. A child of God becomes as a king because he bravely fights against the Devil and sin, and hereafter shall reign with Christ in glory. God's children also become prophets in the sense that they understand God's Word, and proclaim God's Word, and are witnesses of the Lord Jesus. They become priests because they give themselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord, and their whole life is devoted to the Lord, and they give themselves to prayer.

So, we can say the life of a Christian is characterized by prayer. Without true prayer, there is no spiritual life. A formal prayer of some words thoughtlessly recited, that's not really prayer. When prayer is only formal, or when prayer is completely lacking, this betrays the absence of spiritual life. When there are no yearnings after the Lord and no longings for God's grace, and when thirsting for the Lord is absent, and one does not feel a need for confession of sin and [has] no desire to adore and worship God, then you may conclude that such a person is not a Christian, and that is shown by his lack of prayer.

In Scripture, we find that God's children were men and women of prayer. We read about Abraham, how he prayed, how Job prayed for his friends, how Moses interceded for the people, and many more examples can be given. The early church engaged in prayer. When Peter was locked up in prison, the church at Jerusalem was continually in prayer for him. We see of Isaac that he went out into the fields to pray. Daniel prayed three times a day with open windows in the direction of Jerusalem. David would arise in the middle of the night to worship the Lord. Paul and Silas would worship and praise the Lord even while they were in prison with their backs all bloodied by the terrible scourgings they had gone through.

Even the Lord Jesus was characterized by prayer, while He had no sin to confess, while He had all power. He could command the evil spirits. He commanded the wind and the waves, and they obeyed him. He could deliver people from all their sicknesses. He was all-powerful, and yet He needed prayer. He needed to withdraw Himself from the sinful atmosphere of this world and to seek communion with His Father in prayer. So, you read several times in the gospels, and we hope to see them later on in these lectures, how the Lord Jesus went alone to pray.

The most eminent people of God were, above all, men and women of prayer. It is in prayer that one experiences his own weakness. When one is alone before God and pours out his heart unto the Lord, then he becomes aware that he needs God to help him. In prayer, a sinner is uncovered to his own misery, and that misery is that we by nature have lost contact with God. We love ourselves instead of God. That's our misery, and that's what the Lord uncovers [to] you.

In your personal prayer, you start to see who you really are, and so you humble yourself. You abhor your sinful inclinations. You moan about your personal sins. You don't do that so much in front of people, but you do that especially in front of God. In that way, communion with the Lord is nurtured, and the love of God is poured out into the heart, and the blood of Christ is shown to be effective to facilitate a living communion with God.

It is in that posture of personal prayer that one learns to rejoice in God. There's a deep-felt love to God that flows from the heart. That's how God's Spirit teaches us. Then, that place where you pray becomes a sacred spot. Where you are alone with God becomes a precious place for you. It is there that the flood gates of Heaven are opened and that the Lord comes down, and you learn to rejoice in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is there that you anticipate the future glorious life with God. There you realize "that all things must work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose," Romans eight verse 28. It is this glorious and most tender matter that we wish to study in the forthcoming lectures.

There's much to be said about the topic of prayer, and we must limit ourselves. But at the outset, let it be said that nothing is so invigorating for personal spiritual wellbeing than a life of prayer. It's the heartbeat of the life of faith that makes it so precious. In prayer, you are led by God's Spirit. And in heaven, the Lord Jesus prays also along with you, bringing your prayers to God.

The Lord gives us such rich encouragements to pray. God hears prayer. Listen to what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew six verse six, "But when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut your door, pray to your Father, which is in secret, and your Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." And in Matthew seven verses 7 through 11, we read the encouraging words, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

The Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples in John 14 verse 13 and 14, "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." And the next chapter, John 15 verse seven, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." And the Apostle Paul encourages his people to be praying always (I Thessalonians 5:17). And James encourages us in James one verse five, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

So, there you see how the Lord encourages us to expect all we stand in need of, and the Lord can even give before we pray. Isaiah 65 verse 24, "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Much distress and problems in life can be related to a lack of prayer. Neglect of prayer leads to lukewarm churches, and when those who are called after God's name become captivated by the pleasures of the world, by the pride of life and the lust of the flesh, then prayer will be neglected and the result will be misery and distress.

That's how King Hezekiah assessed the spiritual setting of the people of Judah in Second Chronicles 29 verses six and eight: "Our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes." That's all because of a neglect of prayer, neglect of seeking God, that miseries come to pass because we are cutting ourselves off from the source of every blessing.

Prayer is a means to receive grace, but prayer is also an aim. It should be the aim of God's people here in life to cultivate prayer, that they should lead a life of prayer. Faith means to trust and hope upon the living God. Faith is the means through which prayer ascends to heaven. Romans 10 verse 14, "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" So, faith is necessary. It's through this faith that God is glorified. When God the Holy Spirit opens the lips of a sinner and teaches those to pray who before were silent to God, this is glorifying to God. It is most quickening and livening for spiritual life.

So, the Lord Jesus has given elaborate instruction on prayer. Especially after the disciples came to Him and heard how He was praying so tenderly, so beautifully, they asked Him, "Teach us to pray." The disciples had never heard anyone praying like that. They were accustomed to the formal prayers of the Pharisees, the hypocritical prayers. But the way the Lord Jesus prayed, it was tender, loving, familiar. Moved by this, they asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray, and so the Lord Jesus gave them a model for prayer. That's what is called the Lord's Prayer.

We read this in Matthew six, "Our Father which 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 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (verses 9–13). This is what we refer to as the Lord's Prayer, but it's not necessarily given as a form prayer that we should just copy and recite. No, it's given to us as a format along which to pray, as a model for prayer. We find here actually a well-balanced blueprint for how to organize our personal prayers.

So, in these series of lectures, we hope to consider the various aspects of this prayer, of this model, how to pray. We see the address of God as Father in heaven, and that's given to stir up the right frame of mind in prayer: childlike reverence, an expectation. Father, that speaks of love, and He is in heaven. He is all power. After that, we see in this model for prayer the first three petitions, and they all begin with "Thy." They are focused upon God. God is in focus: God's name, God's kingdom, God's will.

So, when we say God's kingdom, "thy kingdom come," this concerns the preservation and the increase of the church and the destruction of all that would oppose God's kingdom and the advancement of Christ's dominion in every sphere of life. So, in this prayer, the focus is first upon God's name, "Thy name be hallowed." God must receive all glory; and then, "thy kingdom must come," the extension of thy kingdom, that the church would grow and prosper here on earth. Then, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and that's a prayer that people would learn to do the will of God, that they would learn to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow the Lord Jesus, doing His will.

Subsequently, the Lord Jesus teaches us that we may also ask God for our daily bread and our daily needs. We may lay these needs before the Lord, realizing that He will be a continual source of all supplies and that we should be content and have a trusting attitude. Then, the Lord Jesus also teaches us to ask for forgiveness of all our sins because we must confess our daily sins before the Lord. And then, if God forgives our sins, then the Lord Jesus shows us that we should be willing to forgive the sins of others. If we are not able or willing to forgive the small debt of others toward us, then God will not forgive us our great debt.

God's children still live here in this world full of temptation, have hearts inclined to wickedness. The Devil assaults God's children, and therefore we must daily pray that we will be not led into temptation, but be delivered from the power of the Devil. So, we are dependent upon God's care that He will not lead us into temptation. Then the Lord Jesus also gives us a pleading ground in prayer, and that is what we call the foundation of prayer, a pleading ground, something you may plead upon, a basis for your prayer, and that is that His kingdom will come and that God has all power to deliver, that He does all things to His glory. And so, it ends, "thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Then, prayer is concluded by that little word, "Amen." Amen. Yet, there's so much contained in that little word "Amen" when it is spoken by faith. We also hope to consider in one of these lectures this little word, "Amen," which has so much grace and power in it.

So, following this model for prayer, we will become aware that prayer is actually very exciting and encouraging. For God's children do not speak to a distant and remote God, but to a God who is close to us. He knows us, and He lets us realize that He knows us and that He cares for us; and that awareness of God's care happens especially in personal prayer. So, beside these various petitions of the Lord's Prayer that we hope to consider, there are also certain practical matters related to prayer. We wish to consider them also in some subsequent lectures. Questions such as, when should we pray or with whom should we pray, and how should we pray with our families? Also, for instance, what are the contents of prayer? In other words, what is the format according to which we should pray? How should we pray? Do we pray to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost? Or can we also pray directly to the Lord Jesus, and how should we say this?

Many of those who follow these lectures hope to become pastors, or maybe you are already a pastor, and therefore it's useful to consider the prayer life of a pastor. Every pastor should be a man of prayer, and that is what

we hope to discuss in a subsequent lecture. There are also various difficulties related to prayer because prayer takes energy. Prayer is struggling. Prayer is not easy. Many of us are under time restrictions. How do we find time to pray? At times, it can also be difficult to vocalize our needs, to express our desires in words. There can also be moments that we think our prayers are useless, that God is not answering them, and that can be very disheartening. Therefore, it's important how we are to view that matter of what we call 'unanswered prayer.'

Besides that, we also have to pay attention to the necessity of persevering in prayer, not to give up because the evil one will shoot his arrows at the prayer life of a Christian. He does not want the Christian to pray. He is afraid of prayer. He does not know how God would answer these prayers, and so the Devil seeks to undermine personal prayer. So, we hope to consider also in one of the following lectures the hindrances to prayer.

Then, the final lecture will deal with the blessings of prayer. The result of intense prayer is that one will be exercised to godliness. Then, one receives assurance of salvation. One experiences living communion with God in prayer. God's love flows through the heart. In order to gain these blessings, it is important to know a life of continual ardent prayer. One needs to discipline himself in this practice. So, we need to pray always, and we should not give up. In this way, you will see much fruit in your life, and that's all received in the way of prayer. So, shall we start off with these lectures? It's actually a journey along which we will look at the various aspects of prayer, and we hope that we will be invigorated and encouraged, and that we will learn about prayer, and that we will see how the treasures of God are unlocked through personal prayer. Thank you.

Lecture 2

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN

During our first lecture, we considered the biblical foundation for prayer. The Lord Jesus exhorts us repeatedly to pray because God hears prayer. It's through prayer that we are united to the living, powerful, good-doing God, and so the Lord Jesus has given us a format in which we are called to pray, a kind of a model, a kind of a framework, and that's what we find in what we call the Lord's Prayer.

In this prayer, we find the address, how and whom we should address, and that we should pray only to God, the living One. The Bible is very clear that man may only pray to God. The Lord Jesus says it Himself in Matthew 4, "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (verse 10). This is the echo of what we find in the first commandment of the 10 Commandments given by Moses to the people of Israel, where the Lord says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." We may only pray to God.

Yet we, in our heart, have this inclination to devise and fabricate all kind of gods, things we trust in or people we lay our confidence in. And so, we are by nature inclined to idol worship, and that's a great sin. It's not only people who worship images, that they are called idol worshipers, but also people who live in our modern world, who live in our modern society. Some of us may have money, some of us may have wealth and riches, or certain people we are focusing our attention upon, and we trust in them and actually we worship them as a god. And so, idol worship is a grave sin in the lives of people.

This was also the terrible sin of Israel. In Israel, before the days of the exile, they continually turned to idol worship. After the exile from Babylon, when they came back, we don't read anymore that much about idol worship, but still they worshiped idols. They worshiped themselves, their self-righteousness, and they had their money that they were focused upon. They still had idols. Idol worship is a great sin. We may only worship the Lord God.

Repeatedly the Lord declared to His people that He is their God, and the prophets compare the relationship between the Lord and His people to that of a marriage bond, like love between a husband and a wife. Now a wife cannot have several husbands that she loves. She must only love her faithful, her lawful husband, and so the Lord says unto Israel, "I am your lawful husband; you must serve and worship me." Therefore, they were not allowed to worship other gods, and likewise we may not worship other gods. The Lord God is not a god between other gods. No, He is the only God, and we may only worship the Lord God.

We may not worship saints. We may not worship ancestors, or other people or other things. In some churches they are encouraged to worship images of, let's say Mary or the Lord Jesus, but we may not worship images either. In certain circles, people call upon angels, and it's even sad to say that some people even worship the devil, but

we may only worship God. He is our Maker. He sustains our lives, and He must receive all praise, honor and adoration. We must seek His face, and we are called to trust in Him, for only God can give us everything we need for time and eternity.

As we call upon the Lord God, we must also realize how we call upon the Lord God. We must reverence Him. That is to say, we must address Him with humility, and we must consider Him as the Holy God that we should come before Him, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices that would be holy and acceptable to Him.

As we pray to God, we must first realize Who God is. He is far above our understanding, and yet He reveals Himself in His Word. He reveals Himself as the everlasting, good-doing, loving and compassionate God. God is love; He is full of loving kindness. Loving kindness is a special love and care He has towards His people. We see God's care and loving kindness in the fact that He provides for our needs. You will have experienced many times, how the Lord cared for you, how He answered your prayers, how He gave deliverance out of a certain need, and so we must realize that God is a God of love.

Also, the Lord God is glorious. He is self-sufficient, self-existent. He is so glorious, He doesn't need any other being. He is full of perfection. He dwells in an inaccessible light. His perfections cannot be compared to anything. His nature is for us humans, far beyond our understanding. He is infinitely above us, and so we can say that God is immortal. He is from everlasting to everlasting, and He loves His people with an unchangeable love. The love to His people is constant. It's not affected by their deeds, by their good deeds or by their backsliding. The Lord God has an everlasting, continual, unchanging love for His people, and that's why the Lord will never forsake the works of His hands.

The Lord God is also the Holy God. He is completely righteous, holy, faithful, dedicated to Himself, and so we can rely upon Him. There is no deceit in God. His Word is the truth. He speaks the truth. His judgements are pure. He is the Truth. He is altogether lovely. God is also the Almighty One. God has all power to do all things according to His pleasure, and therefore God is the One Who is not only able to keep us from all danger, but He is also fully able to sustain our lives and to give us what we need for this temporal, daily life.

He is fully able to help us in all our circumstances. He gives us daily food and drink, provides us with clothing. He causes the soil to be fertile, and that the Earth brings forth fruit and that the plants grow. All beings come from His hand. He sustains every living thing, and so He is the Almighty God.

As we address God, we must therefore realize Who He is, and so He is also the All-knowing God. He knows everything about us. He knows your and my needs, and because of the fact that the Lord God is all-knowing, we don't have to carefully explain every detail of our need to Him. He knows it in advance. You know, it is just good for us that we unburden ourselves when we lay our needs before God. It's not that we must inform God about our needs as if He would not know; He knows it all. You may pour out all your needs, and you may empty your heart from all its burdens before the Lord.

The Lord Jesus also tells us that when we pray, we therefore do not have to use long sentences and difficult words and carefully comprised sentences. We may, as a child, call upon God because the Lord Jesus said, "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:8) because He is the All-knowing God.

We must realize that in whatever circumstances we are, He knows exactly everything. In simplicity and in meekness, we may simply lay all our needs before the Lord, and it is good to lay all your needs, the little ones and the big ones, all before the Lord. For the Lord, there is no difference between a big need and a little need because He is Almighty God. Don't be ashamed to lay your little daily needs before the Lord. As a child asks its father for all things it needs, also the simple things, so you also may lay all your needs before the Lord. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" Second Chronicles 16:9.

When we pray to God, we must realize Who God is, and it's not only that He is the Almighty One and that He is the All-knowing One, but He is present everywhere. What a great comfort it is for us that God is everywhere present. Wherever you may be and whatever circumstances you may run into, God will be there. He will guide His people. His people are never alone in whatever circumstances they may be.

You know, we do not realize what may be lying ahead of us, but we do not have to worry because God will be there. To the Lord, all things are open and clear. To Him, the darkness and the light are the same. The Lord knows where we are and what we are doing, and even when His people stray and when there is backsliding, He

will lead them back. It may be that He will then chastise His people. He may hurt them so that they will flee back to Him, but because God knows everything, whatever may be the case, we may cry to the Lord and He will hear.

Wherever we are, we are never beyond His reach. What a great comfort to know that God is almighty, all-knowing, and everywhere present. When we see all this, we must realize that that is how we may address the Lord in prayer. What an unfathomable privilege it is that we may so come before God. We're even invited. We're even encouraged to come close to the Lord and to be in His presence. It's an undeserved mercy that we may come before the Almighty and good-doing God.

As we address the Lord God, we must realize Who God is, have some understanding of Who the Lord is, and so we must also realize that He is the God who dwells in heaven, "our Father which art in heaven". We are on the Earth. We are sinners of the dust, and how is it possible that we mortal, sinful people can lay our needs before this almighty and all-glorious God? The answer lies in God's love towards us through the Lord Jesus Christ, because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and the Son of God came into this world to remove every hindrance or impediment between God and man.

Therefore, He had to bear the wrath of God against the whole human race. So, the Lord Jesus opened for us a fresh, a new, a living way to enter unto God, but Jesus Himself, He is the Way. When we call upon God, we must do that in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because He opened the way. God poured out His divine anger upon sin, upon His Son. His Son bore the wrath of God. Let us never forget that God proves His love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, He gave His Son for us to die on the cross (Romans 5:8).

We may address the Lord God through His Son, and then it's good to focus upon the fact that the Lord God is in heaven: "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). It's true the Lord is everywhere present. He knows everything. He sees everything, but heaven is, so to speak, His home. The Bible says that Earth is His footstool; heaven is His dwelling place, His throne (Isaiah 66:1). There He dwells in an inaccessible light, in the presence of His angels, and there they continually praise, worship and adore God.

And so often in the Bible, you're called to look up unto Him. Why to look up? That's a symbolic expression to say that the Lord is in heaven. He is beyond us. He is above us. On the other hand, so often we read that the Lord is asked to look down from heaven. Heaven is the place of glory. It's the place of everlasting rest. It's a place where all God's people shall be gathered when they leave this life. They will be immediately translated to be there where they belong. They belong to their faithful, loving Father Who drew them, and Who is at work leading them through this life until they one day shall be with Him.

What's now so beautiful about heaven is that there is no sin, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and that everything is holy and glorious there. That's where the tree of life is, and that's where the throne of God is, together with the Lamb and the countless multitude of God's people who have been redeemed from the Earth. Heaven is actually the home of God's children, because what do God's children long for? They long for the Lord: "my soul thirsts for God" (Psalm 42:2). Like the apostle Paul said, "That I may know him," that is Christ," and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

You see, in this life on Earth, we are never finished in realizing Who God is, and learning to know more of God. Isn't it your desire, above all other desires, that you wish to love God with all your heart, with all your soul? Here on Earth, we cannot do that. We are unable to do so, and so we must realize that heaven is the home of God's people. That heaven must be the aim of our life, and therefore let us not live for this present life. It may seem so attractive, but we must live for the life to come, to heaven in glory, with the Lord.

The Lord Jesus shows us here that God is Father. Isn't that a beautiful way to address God? We on our own would never have dared to call God Father. Among the heathens, there's no one who dares to address their God as Father. Father means love and care and consideration, and even self-denial for the wellbeing of children. God is Father so that we would realize how good God is. It is the Lord Jesus especially Who showed us that God is Father because the Lord Jesus Himself dwelled from all eternity, in the bosom of the Father, and He made His love known to us. Christ might have revealed the thoughts and the will of His Father, but He came especially in this world to unveil the heart of God, and that's a heart of love. Here we see the deepest thoughts, and then we hear the most tender words that ever have been uttered, that we may call God Father.

It's not that we should think that the Lord Jesus earned the love of God the Father for us. It's not that God the Father was angry with us, and that the Son then wanted to come to this world, and that He would cause God the

Father to change. No. God the Father loved His people from all eternity, and out of love, He gave His Son because He wanted to reconcile these sinners unto Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ, out of love, came into this world to give Himself; and the Holy Spirit, Who was poured out after the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, it is with love that He works in sinner's hearts and reveals Christ to them.

All this flows forth from the love of God the Father. He is the source of all love. He let His Son pay the penalty of sin; and that's an everlasting miracle, a miracle, as long as we live, we will never be able to fathom. That miracle becomes greater the more we learn to approach this Holy, Majestic, and Almighty God with our needs. How can I, as sinner of the dust, come to God with all my needs? That's only possible through the Mediator, because He is the living way to God, and that's how we find the Lord Jesus in the Lord's Prayer.

We sometimes hear that people say you don't find the name of Christ in the Lord's Prayer, and nowhere do we read there that we ask this all in the name of Jesus, but you must understand, this whole Lord's Prayer is only possible through the mediatorial work of Christ. It's only because of Him that we may pray these petitions to the Lord. Throughout the whole of the Lord's Prayer, we see Christ. We may address God as our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the Lord Jesus, it would be blasphemy for us to say that God is our Father, for we have sinned grievously against Him.

And so, when a sinner on Earth flees to the Lord God in prayer, that is only possible through the finished work of Christ Jesus. He earned that access to God, and He earned that because He Himself was cut off from that access to God. When He was on the cross, He was cast out of the presence of God, and there He was in outer darkness and He cried out to His God, but His God did not hear Him. He had no access to God. He was in outer darkness, and that is where you and I belong to be forever, but He took the place of all those who trust in Him. And through Him, we may now pray to God and expect, by grace, God's mercy and care for us.

The Lord Jesus instructs us here to say, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9), but you know, in order to say that truly, "our Father," we personally must be connected to Christ. He is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. It's only through the Lord Jesus that a man has access to God (John 14:6). And so, we need to know the Lord Jesus Christ personally as our Mediator. Outside of Christ, we cannot approach God.

When we do not know Christ as our Savior, then we may be afraid of God, and then I will be just like the heathens. They view their gods as tyrants, and these heathens, they try to appease their gods. They try to buy their favor, and that's how you view God if you are still outside of Christ. The heathens will only come to their gods when they cannot help themselves anymore, and that's how it is with a person outside of Christ. He does not care about God, only when he is in trouble, then he will try to do things to earn some favor of God.

The reality is that by nature, we are enemies of God, and we refuse to bow for His authority. It's only by regeneration that sinners are adopted to be sons of God. Because of our sins and rebellion against God, we cannot just assume and just say that God is our Father. We find a beautiful example of that in the parable of the prodigal son, the lost son who left his father, and who spent all the goods of his father in a faraway country. Then when he was in poverty, he realized how good his father was, and how he had shamefully misbehaved himself against his father. The prodigal son desired to go back to his father. He still calls him "father," but he realizes that he is not worthy to be called his son, and so we read in Luke 15, verse 18 and 19, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'"

This prodigal son is actually our image. We have forsaken God the Father. We have shamefully misbehaved ourselves; and just as the prodigal son gave up his right to be a son of his father, likewise when a sinner is convicted of his sins and his own unworthiness, he will also say, "I am not worthy to be called Thy son." Because what is now their sin? It is rebellion against God. It's wanting to be as God. It's wishing that God would not even exist, and that we could be our own God and do as we please. We wish to cast God from His throne. That's how grievous, how awful our sins are. Then the Lord Jesus tells us to address God as our Father, because the house of the Father is still open for runaway children of Adam. The Lord Jesus calls us to show reverence and trust, but also humility when we come before the Lord God.

Have you seen in your life, this natural inclination to go against God? Have you realized in your life that you are not worthy to be called a child of God, and that you are also not worthy to call God your Father? This is such a miracle, that unworthy people are still invited to come to the house of God the Father. They are still welcome

to come home again, and that's the miracle of God's love. There at His feet, you will be overwhelmed by His love, that He's still willing to have you, regardless of what you have done. That He is still willing to be a loving Father in Christ, and then His Holy Spirit teaches you to pray "Abba, Father." And you join in with God's children, and together with His Church, you pray, "Our Father which art in heaven."

This humble attitude, this trusting attitude, this attitude of reverence to God characterizes true prayer. Just like a child respects its parents and trusts them, so we may also trust and respect and have reverence towards the Lord God. We are not to be too rash in coming before the Holy One. We are not to address God in an irreverent manner. He is still the High One who dwells in heaven. The Lord Jesus says, "Our Father which art in heaven," that shows the distance. God is in heaven, and yet at the same time, He is close. We are called, not to keep distance, but to come close to God, with anticipation that God is willing to hear us because of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reverence teaches us to bow before God because of His holiness and majesty, and confidence teaches us to draw nigh to God, to come close to Him, hoping upon His goodness and faithfulness, and being encouraged by His power. For Jesus' sake, I may pray like a child who would ask something of his father, and so we may enter into the palace of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and we may come before His holy throne and speak to him as a child speaks to its father.

When the Lord Jesus tells us to pray "our Father", it is that we may look to God with child-like fear, reverence and expectation, and so this is actually the foundation of prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven," that actually portrays the basis, the foundation of prayer, and that you may be comforted and encouraged that for all things of this life, your heavenly Father will take care of you and will provide for you. For God will much less deny us what we ask of Him in true faith than our parents will refuse us earthly things.

Isn't this a blessed illustration? A child asking something from his father knowing that he needs something, knowing that his father will not refuse him. Father will help me. Even when a father does not give certain things to his child, then a trusting child will not complain, but will realize that father knows best. That's how the life of faith is as well. Faith lives in trust that God will not withhold any good thing from me that I may need in my life. When something is withheld from me, then I may still trust that the Lord knows what is best for me, and that all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Then I may not know why certain things happen to me, but if this God, Who proves His love by giving His Son for me, if He withholds something from me, then I may trust that He will be faithful. He is far wiser than I am. I am but a foolish child, and His "No" is far wiser than my "Yes," and so I learn to lay down all my cares before Him, and His Spirit gives me grace and confidence to leave all these cares before Him, and I may have good courage that He will give me all things I stand in need of.

Then finally, there's one aspect left of this beautiful first address in this Lord's Prayer, and that is something that we find in the expression "our," "our Father." The Lord Jesus did not tell us to pray "my Father" but "our Father." This shows that all God's children are together in this prayer. We are not just individuals who individually pray and ask God certain matters, but all God's children, they form a body, they form a unity, and so we are to pray together with others around us, and we are to remember others around us in our prayer. Because there should be a special bond between all those who love and fear the Lord. They are united in Christ, and so they pray together, for one another and with one another, they pray "our Father."

The expression "our Father" shows us then the need to pray for one another, and so this petition lifts us up in the presence of God, but we are not alone there. We are there together with others, and all God's children from all time, all days, from all ages, they are united together in this one prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." How blessed that your God is your Father in heaven. How happy you are to be children of such a Father in heaven. Never are you to be pitied in this world with such a Father Who will help you, Who will care for you, Who will lead you, Who will hold onto you. In life and in death, He will lead you further. You are very blessed with such a Father. Trust then in "our Father which art in heaven." Thank you.

Lecture 3

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Welcome to this third lecture in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. Today we hope to focus on the first petition of the Lord's Prayer and that is "Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). It's amazing that this is the first matter that the Lord Jesus points out to us in prayer. The Lord Jesus doesn't tell us to first pray for our needs or for our physical needs. That often we do, but the first and most important matter in prayer is that God would be honored.

The totality of our lives must be focused upon God. He must be loved, glorified. We must learn to obey and love Him. He comes first, and that's why this first petition is a petition for the honor of God: "Hallowed be Thy name." 'Grant that Thou would receive all honor, praise, and adoration.' That should also be the aim of our life. That should be our greatest desire, that whatever happens to us that God would be glorified in our lives because our life is failed if we have not learned to glorify God.

That's why God made us, that we would not live for ourselves but that He would be glorified in us and that we must learn to glorify Him and to honor Him with our mind, with our heart, with our understanding, with our words, with our bodies, with all we have and with all we do (Mark 12:30). And sad to say, we have failed in that respect because so often we seek our own honor.

Even God's children who know grace, they can still so often seek their own honor and seek to elevate themselves, and they can become proud. But when God works in the heart, He teaches us to forsake ourselves and to have the aim of our life, the honor and the glory of God. That's how the Lord renews a sinner. He does it to the glory of His name. When the Lord enters the heart, the beginning is there that the Lord would glorify Himself, and then it becomes the longing of His people. If things are spiritually well, that longing will increase and become greater; and that's why the Lord Jesus teaches us "Hallowed be Thy name."

You know this is the most glorious thing in life. It is so good for us that we would learn to glorify God. It is the most blessed activity that man can do on Earth, that God would receive honor, praise, and adoration. So in order to hallow God's name, we need to know God's name. We need to know Who God is, and that's why the Lord reveals Himself to us in His word: that we would know Who He is, that we would know His Name.

It's especially in His name that the Lord reveals Himself. You see, we did not make up names with which we call upon God. God made up these names Himself; and in His Name, He reveals Who He is. The names that we bear, our fathers and mothers have given us these names. But these names do not characterize who we are. But when God gives Himself names, these names are a self-revelation of God. They explain Who God is.

So, the Lord reveals Himself with the name Yahweh. That's Hebrew. That name is actually Jehovah or Yahweh; that means I Am Who I Am (Exodus 3:14). That may seem to you to be a strange name, but that is a very beautiful name because that shows that God is always the same. We change. We cannot say of ourselves "I am" because we fluctuate. But the Lord God is the everlasting I Am and that shows that He is reliable. "He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever lasting" (Hebrews 13:8).

He is reliable. He is faithful. He is self-sufficient. That's why you may trust in Him. The Lord has also revealed Himself by other names. We can think of the name El Shaddai (Genesis 17:1), which means Almighty Ruler, or you have in Hebrew another name, Adonai (Genesis 15:12), and that shows Himself as the Owner, as the Master of Heaven and Earth. He is the Lord.

So, the Lord also calls Himself the Lord Sabaoth (Romans 9:29). That is a name that denotes that He is the Lord of Hosts and that all the angels are at His disposal, and He comes to deliver His Church with His heavenly host.

We may know Who God is from His names, but we also may know God from His characteristics, His attributes. And again, we see how the Lord reveals Himself in His attributes. That He is, for instance, the Eternal One. He has no beginning, no ending. He is the compassionate One. He has care for people. His compassions are genuine. They are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22–23). He is love. He is full of long suffering (Numbers 14:18) and that is having patience with His people, caring, loving patience.

God is also the high and the lofty One. And yet He delights to dwell with the lowly. Isaiah 57:15, that well-known text, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

God is also the Mighty One. We know God by His power. Look, for instance, at creation. God by His power wrought creation. He called all things to be brought forth from nothing, and He did it by speaking (Genesis 1). His Word is with power. We see that in creation, but we see that throughout Scripture that He is the God Who speaks, and it is. He speaks matters into existence. He speaks to the wind and the sea, and they obey Him (Mark 4:39). It's by His Word that He raises up the dead (Mark 5:41–42; John 11:43–44). It's by His Word that He shows His power.

God is also wise in all His dealings and works. He leads His people, guides them in a wise manner. Maybe you have noticed that in your life how the Lord led you upon paths you would have never chosen, but how wise was the Lord in doing so? How caring, how loving? So, we also see God's goodness, that He cares for this world. He cares for all people. He opens His hand. He feeds every living thing. He lets His sun rise upon good and evil (Matthew 5:45). He gives rain and sunshine. He does that to people who love Him, but He is also good to people who do not love Him. How good has the Lord been for you and for me?

When we are called to know God by His characteristics, we also see His justice. He is so just that He cannot stand any injustice, that He would rather have sin not go unpunished, and therefore have sin punished in His Son. That is so sinners will be reconciled to Him. God loves that which is just and righteous, and so He saves His people along the way of righteousness and justice. All their sins have to be paid for, and they are paid for in His Son.

And so, God is just. He punishes sin in His Son or in the sinner, but He will punish sin. But at the same time, God is also full of mercy because He tells us in His Word that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked would turn to him and find mercy in God (Ezekiel 33:11). In spite of our unworthiness, the Lord still invites us to receive salvation in Him. He delights in mercy.

God is also true. He is full of truth. His Word is the truth. The Lord Jesus says of Himself "I am the truth" (John 14:6), and that's why His Word will always be fulfilled. And so, we see Who God is in His attributes. We see His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His justice, His mercy, and His truth. This is all clearly displayed. There's so much in God.

We read in the Bible then Who God is. Ultimately what is needed is that this good, powerful, loving God has dealings with us. You see, then you experience Who God is. Then you experience the truth of God's Word in your own life. Then you see how God is just. Then you experience how God is merciful, how He is loving, how He is wise in His dealings with you. Then it's not just that you want to believe the Bible because it's the Bible, but you experience in your heart that this is all very true, and that's how you learn to know Who God is.

That's what we call the knowledge of faith. It is trusting in God. That's not just a matter of the mind, but it's a matter of the heart; and then you know Who God is, and that's why you love Him and you wish to know Him more and you wish to love Him more. Then He becomes the aim of your life. Then you learn to live for God, and then you want to have Him and His Name hallowed in your life.

This knowledge of faith is translated in love to Him. Ultimately the Lord reveals Himself to us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For the apostle John says in John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And those who have seen Christ have seen His Father. In Christ we see the reflection of God the Father. Therefore, if you want to know Who God is, be often at the feet of Christ and look unto Jesus. You will learn to know Who God is through His Son, Christ Jesus.

It's essential for us to know God. When you know something of His love and grace, you desire to be made like unto Him. Then you wish to be clothed with Christ. Then you pray that God would impress His image upon you, and then you understand why the apostle Paul said that the aim of his life was actually to know Christ and the power of His resurrection in Him (Philippians 3:8-14).

Have you become desirous to know the Lord? Have you tasted that the Lord is good? Have you learned to love Him? Then you will desire above all things that His Name will be hallowed in your life. So, we need to honor God in the totality of our life. That is what this petition actually means: "Hallowed be Thy Name." That means that we learn to honor God in everything we do. And so, we need the Lord God to work out this obedience in our lives.

But, as I said before, we have this wicked nature within us that we so often, in a very subtle manner, we want to honor ourselves. We would rather promote our own name and our own honor instead of honoring God. This is sin against the first commandment: No other gods before Me (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). It's also sin against this first petition: Hallowed be Thy Name. Because in life, it's not about our name. It's about the Name of God.

How wretched we are that so often we can be puffed up, and we seek our own honor and that we think that we ourselves are so important. What a blessing it would be to be delivered from that evil and to learn what it is to be meek and lowly of heart. If only we would learn to seek God's honor first. That would be such a deliverance to be liberated from that seeking our own honor.

Have we learned to see that we are so self-centered? Have you already become aware that we so often seek ourselves and that we sin against a good-doing God? Have we learned to have grief and sorrow because of that inclination within us? Have we learned to resist this inclination? Because when you know the love of God in your heart, you will want to honor him. Then you will be at the feet of Christ and you will ask Him to be delivered from this seeking of ourselves and of our own honor.

Think of the Lord Jesus. He never sought His own honor. He was meek and lowly of heart, and He tells us to learn of Him, to be meek and lowly of heart (Matthew 11:29). At the feet of Christ, looking up to Him, you will look into His face, and you will see Him Who sought not His own honor but the honor of the One who sent Him. And there, shame will fill your heart and at the same time a desire and a longing that the Lord Jesus would fill you with His Spirit; and what a blessing it is to be comforted by this Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

It's not only that He washes the sins away, but He also changes your nature. Through His Spirit, He teaches you step by step to seek the honor of God. He teaches you to pray, 'Teach me, Lord, to live according to Thy will. Lead me in Thy righteousness (Psalm 5:8) and cause me to honor Thee with all that I have.'

You know, to seek God's honor is also to seek the wellbeing of people around us. We need to be genuinely concerned about other people. We should suffer along with them. When they are in need, we should be close to them. People out of love to God will show love and concern for those around them. And by doing this, they will honor God. That's how God is honored in their lives, when they have love and compassion to those around them.

Is that not what the Lord Jesus said to His people in Matthew 25 when he will refer to His people as the ones who helped others in need, who gave them to eat, and who gave thirsty people to drink? And when others were naked, that they gave them clothing and that they visited the sick and those who were imprisoned. The Lord Jesus says there in Matthew 25:40, "Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

You see, it's honoring to God when we show love and compassion toward the neighbor and when we have care for others around us. This is hallowing God's name in the daily practice of our life. And so, we need to honor

God in the totality of our lives. But in order to do this, we need to be humble. We need to be humbled by God. He teaches humility. And He does that by showing us that we realize that in all things we are dependent upon God and that only the Lord God can fulfill our every need.

And so, we recognize His greatness, His goodness, and His mercy and that we, ourselves, can do nothing without Him. And so, we are brought to humble ourselves before God. The Lord causes us to be humble by revealing Himself to us in His greatness and goodness, love and mercy. But on the other hand, the Lord teaches us humility by showing us who we are, and there's a growth in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of ourselves. So, the Lord uncovers more sins in our life and shows us more and more our sinful nature.

On this side of the grave, we will never outgrow our sinfulness. Think of the apostle Paul who was a holy, righteous man, but he calls himself the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15). You find this so often in Scripture that people learn to humble themselves before God, especially those who know the greatest measure of grace. They are the ones who will humble themselves the most before God. Because the Lord shows His people more and more that they greatly fall short of the glory of God.

In ourselves, we are nothing more than lepers who in Israel had to cry out "Unclean, unclean" because we always carry this unclean nature along with us. Although the Lord lives in us, although the Lord is impressing His image upon us and we bear the fruit of God's Holy Spirit, there is also that old nature working in us that we are in ourselves unclean. With our thoughts, words, and actions, we still so often go against God and that gives the deepest grief in life: that I cannot love and honor God as I should. And so, I pray, 'Lord, let Thy Name be honored in my life. Let Thy Name receive all glory. Hallowed be Thy Name.'

And so, we are called to love the Lord God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we fail in these things. On this side of the grave, we will not be able to do this perfectly. And so, we see that also in God's Word: how children of God, who were greatly privileged and who had received much grace and much faith and much trust in the Lord, that they still have their sins. That's why as we listen to how they pray, that they continually are humbling themselves before God.

Look how Abraham, the friend of God, is praying in Genesis 18. He is praying not for himself. He is there praying for Sodom, and he is actually praying for his nephew, Lot, and his family. See how he humbles himself before the Lord God. He says there in verse 27, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, and I am but dust and ashes." How he humbles himself.

We think also of Jacob, who had received visions of the Lord, who had received the promises that God would be his God. Then see how Jacob says in Genesis 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant." And we read also of Job, who was a righteous, God-fearing man. He says in Job 40:4, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer the? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

And think of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6:5. There he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." And the apostle Paul says in Romans 3:10-12, "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not one."

And so when we seek the honor of God, we must do this with humility, with an awareness of who we are really. But at the same time, as we approach God, we may do this with hope, with expectation. We may come before the Lord as a child comes before his father or mother. We saw that in the previous lecture. But when we seek to approach God in prayer and we seek the honor of His Name, we may be expecting all good things from Him because He is a benevolent, a good-doing God.

He is willing to give us all things we stand in need of. We may be greatly encouraged because there is forgiveness with God (Psalm 130:4), and He has promised to redeem His people from all their iniquities (Psalm 130:8), and God will not despise a broken heart and a contrite spirit (Psalm 51:17). And so, we may humble ourselves with expectation, with true genuine hope upon God because the Lord God is willing to give. He will give so much. Ultimately, He must receive all honor, and He will receive all honor. Every knee will ultimately bow before him (Philippians 2:10), but now He is willing to give. He is willing to care.

Think of how the Lord Jesus cared for His disciples, that He even humbled Himself, willing to wash the feet of the disciples. And so, He is willing to give us far above what we deserve. All your needs, you may lay before

Him. And when the Lord Jesus was willing to humble Himself before the disciples, how we must be willing to humble ourselves before others, and so we must seek the wellbeing of others. We must be willing to be their servant. We must pray for them. And we must lay, as the apostle Paul says, supplications and prayers and intercessions before God.

And we do that for all men in First Timothy 2:1. And God's children may come in humility and with confession of their sins. They may acknowledge their unworthiness and at the same time realize that God, their Father in Heaven, will give them all things they stand in need of, that He is a faithful and a good-doing God and that it's so glorifying that we so come with anticipation before this God. We honor God.

So, as we seek to honor God, we must do that by knowing His characteristics. We must honor God in the totality of our lives, that everything in us may be devoted to Him, and we must honor God by showing reverence and being humble and humbling ourselves before Him. But we also honor God when we lay all our needs before Him.

We see that continually in God's Word, that God is honored when we lay our needs before Him. God's Word is full of people who had no strength, but God called them to fulfill a certain calling. Whatever the Lord calls you to do in life, you don't have the strength to do that; and the Lord will teach you also to realize that you don't have strength to do it, that you need God to help you, to sustain you.

And so, we see repeatedly in God's Word that great men of God were in themselves weak, and they laid all their weakness and all their inability before God, and that was honoring to God. Even when it seems that God did not answer them, they still laid their needs before the Lord continually, and this is honoring to God: Lord, I can do nothing without Thee (John 15:5).

For instance, look at Moses, that great man of God, the mediator between God and Israel of the Old Testament. He could not even speak properly, and that's what he said to the Lord, but the Lord said, "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12). And Joshua, he was a slave in Egypt. He was led through the wilderness, and very soon in the wilderness he was appointed as captain over the armies of the Lord, the Israelites. He had to fight against the Amalekites. Later on, he had to capture Jericho, a huge fortified city.

He couldn't do that. He had never gone to military school. He didn't know anything about strategy or warfare. And yet the Lord taught him and gave him strength. The prophet Jeremiah was young, and the prophet Isaiah considered himself to be a man of unclean lips, and Daniel saw the iniquities of himself and of the people. So, they were all unsuitable, but the Lord chooses often unsuitable, unequipped people to serve Himself.

Let that be a comfort to you when you maybe as a pastor wonder, 'How can I ever fulfill this calling?' Well, you cannot, but He can through you, and that's honoring to God. That's how God hallows His Name in your life. Think of the apostles. Many of them were just Hebrew fishermen. How could they proclaim His glorious gospel to a pagan world? We are all unsuitable, all unqualified.

Who can raise children in our own families as we should do that? Who is able to be a faultless husband or wife, a godly spouse? Regardless whatever the Lord calls us to do, we lack the strength to perform it, and now it's so good in life to be dependent upon God, to seek all help from Him. He is the God Who lifts up the needy, Who hears them when they cry to Him (Psalm 72:12). Therefore, our strength is not in ourselves, but it is in God. Therefore, whatever the Lord calls you to do, He will be there to strengthen you. Do not shy away from any calling in your life. Prayer will give you strength, and it will be hallowing the name of God.

And so, when we lay our needs before the Lord, what should we actually be praying for? Well, we should pray, as we will later on see in this Lord's Prayer, we must pray for personal forgiveness of all our sins. We need to be renewed after the image of Christ. That's how God is glorified, that the image, the reflection of His Son rests upon us, that people may see of us, that we have been with Christ as they saw of the apostles.

People may tell that you have been with God in your inner chamber in prayer because of the reflection of the Lord Jesus, not in a literal way that something happens to your face. No, but in the way you behave, in your actions, in your demeanor. You know, you may not even be aware of it yourself; and that's often the best thing, that you don't even see it yourself because easily you will become proud. But that others do see it in you, and that's because you were with the Lord in your inner chamber pouring out your heart before God, begging the Lord for the image of Christ upon you, that He would encourage you in the life of faith, that He would make you brave, that He would equip you with insight and wisdom; and so, you may plead of His goodness and His willingness to give you all things you stand in need of.

So, in your prayers you may rely upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ that for Jesus's sake, God will forgive your sins. God will equip you with all your needs, as He has said, "Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find" (Matthew 7:7). This is all hallowing God's name. He receives the glory, the praise, and the adoration; and you will be led in a new life of obedience to the Lord Jesus. And so, the Lord gives us grace to deny the world, to forsake ourselves, and to love and seek Him above all.

And so, let us pray continually for the Holy Spirit in our lives. That's what God has promised. He will give his Holy Spirit to those who ask of Him. In 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?" You know, it's only through God's Spirit that we can live as Christians.

It's through God's Spirit in you that God will be hallowed and honored in your life, because the Holy Spirit gives love, grace, and mercy. He provides for all things in life, and He leads God's people. He protects them. He is with them when they even have to leave this life (Psalm 23:4). And through His Spirit, God will instruct you and teach you the way you must go. Through His Spirit, you will be kept from falling into sin; and it's through His Spirit that you will learn to resist the temptations of the evil one. Through His Spirit, you will bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life.

And through His Spirit, you will receive wisdom and grace in your daily life. And through His Spirit, the fear of the Lord will be increased in your life; and you will walk humbly with the Lord, and the eternal God will be your refuge, your reliance. He will be your everything, your all in all (I Corinthians 15:28), and that's how God is honored and hallowed in your life. He will do all things good, and it's therefore a rich privilege so to come before the Lord in prayer and that you may pour out all your supplications before Him and that He is a God Who will do all things well (Mark 7:37).

You know when you will see it? You will see it at the end of your life when you come before Him. It's like a boy, a son of a farmer, and the farmer takes his son along, and together they are plowing the fields. When the father has plowed a furrow in the soil, then he gives the plow to his son; and his son holds the plow, but father lays his hand upon the hand of the son; and then the son, he draws a furrow through the field, and it's a straight furrow. At the end of the furrow, then the son looks up at his father with a smile, and the father looks down at his son and says, "Well done, my boy." But it was the hand of the father upon the son, and the son knows it is my dad, my father, who did it all.

And so, when God's people will enter into Heaven, we read in the Parable that then the Lord will say, "Well done, thou faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). But in reality, His children will say, "Thou has done it all. To Thee be all the honor. Thou hast carried me through life. Thou hast done it all. Hallowed be Thy Name for all eternity." And they will lay their crowns at the feet of God, for He must be glorified. He did it all from beginning to the end. Amen.

Thank you.

Lecture 4

THY KINGDOM COME

Welcome to this fourth lecture in the series of Beauty of Prayer. Now I wish to consider the petition the Lord Jesus teaches us, 'Thy kingdom come.' So far, we have seen in the Lord's Prayer that the Lord Jesus tells us to pray, "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come." Is there a relationship between the first petition and the second petition, between 'Hallowed be Thy name' and 'Thy Kingdom come'?

Is there a relationship? Yes, there is because they are both focused upon God, upon His glory and upon His honor. In the first petition we see that God is the Holy One, and He must receive glory, praise and adoration. His name must be hallowed. We see that He is worthy to be loved. He's the Almighty Sovereign, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and all glory must be given to Him. We cannot fathom the greatness of God's name.

It is difficult for us to imagine Who God is because He is far above us. That's why His name must be hallowed, must be honored. It's a most important thing in life. Connected to this is also that His kingdom would come because His kingdom is also glorious. His kingdom is far and wide. In this petition, the Lord Jesus takes us by the hand, and He leads us through the kingdom of God. He shows us how glorious this kingdom is. Just as God Himself is glorious, so this kingdom of God is also glorious. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this kingdom is coming. This kingdom is in development. This kingdom came into our world when the Lord Jesus came. He revealed God to us. He went around preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven has come. Therefore, repent and believe the Gospel.

Ever since His coming, the Kingdom of God is coming into our world. The Lord Jesus is leading all events in world history to implement the coming of this kingdom. When this kingdom is fully come, then all His people, all the elect from all ages and from all nations will be with Him, and they will serve Him without sin. They will everlastingly glorify the Lord. They will love Him above all. How glorious is this kingdom. In that kingdom there will be no sin, no darkness, no stain or blot. They all will be perfect. There they will be an innumerable multitude. That is the longing of His church on Earth.

The coming of His kingdom is the most glorious thing here on Earth, and so His people love His church. His church is the manifestation of His kingdom. They seek the coming of His kingdom because this will be the glory of God.

It's also important as we consider this that the Lord Jesus teaches us "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come." In connection to this also, the Lord Jesus is going to teach us "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." All these matters show us that God must have all the emphasis. God and His honor are far above

everything else. When the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, He teaches us first to pray towards God. That is to say for His honor, for the extension of His kingdom, that sinners learn to do His will. That is most important. God must have all emphasis and the priority in our prayers.

After that, we may lay all our needs before the Lord as the Lord Jesus is going to teach us in the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." We hope to consider that in a future lecture. We see that although our personal needs are important, far above that the most important aspects of prayer must be focused upon God, upon His kingdom and that His will would be done in lives of people. That they learn to follow Him. That must have the emphasis also in our personal prayers.

Now we will focus then upon this matter, this petition, "Thy kingdom come." First of all we can ask the question, what is meant by God's kingdom? Then we can refer to God's kingdom of nature. The Lord God created Heaven and Earth. He created all beings. He created all the animals, all the plants, and so in nature we see His kingdom that the Lord God created. The oceans, the universe, and that He created everyone. He can command all things. The wind and the seas, they are His subjects.

Connected to this kingdom of nature, we can also refer to the kingdom of His Providence. The fact that no person can live without God. That in Him we live and from Him we have our being. That we can do nothing without Him. This world is not ruled by fate, but it is ruled by God, by His Providence. The Lord God commands all things, and in His providential dealings with this world, the Lord God displays His power, His majesty, His goodness. Everything is under His control.

When we are referring to "Thy kingdom come," we are not so much referring to the kingdom of God in nature or, connected to that, His rule in providence in leading all things in this world and in our lives. When we speak about "Thy kingdom come," we are referring to God's special kingdom. That is the realm where God is obeyed and loved. We can say God's kingdom consists of all those who obey and love the Lord God, who recognize Him as Ruler, as Lord, who learn to bow before Him, who are eager to obey Him. We see that His kingdom is present in Heaven, and there it is perfect. That's where we find the angels. The angels are always ready to do the will of God, and they follow His beckoning. Without any objection, they always are ready and prepared to do God's will.

And there in Heaven that's also where the innumerable multitude is being gathered of all the saved of all ages. They are now there already praising and honoring and loving God. That is the manifestation of God's kingdom in Heaven. Besides that, the Lord God also has His kingdom here on Earth. His kingdom here on Earth is found there where people bow before Him. It's not so much an outward kingdom with a capital city. It's not a geographical kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom. It again consists of all those who bow before Him, whether they live in China or in Africa or in America, they together who have learned to follow Him and love Him, who desire to obey Him. They together form the kingdom of God here on Earth.

We also call this the kingdom in which His grace is manifested. The Lord rules over this kingdom, His kingdom here on Earth with His power, with His love and care because He cares for His people. He has regenerated them. He has purchased them with His blood. He watches over them. He protects His people in life and in death. They belong to Him.

We can say the Kingdom of God on Earth is actually His church, and that is not the outward church as we see her, because we know from Scripture that not everyone who outwardly belongs to His church is a true member of His church. Only the ones who are born again, who have learned to love the Lord Jesus with their heart, who have been drawn by His love, have been redeemed by His blood, whose hearts have been renewed, they belong to the church of Christ. They belong to Him. They desire to honor Him. That is where God's people love to honor His name, and they promote His kingdom.

This kingdom is most beautiful. It is a joy in the Earth. It is a blessing when the Lord establishes His kingdom in a nation, where there are various nations in this world where the Lord God has His people. It is a blessing for that nation and for that society that there would be Christians, people who learn to obey God and love Him. These people all belong to their King, the Lord Jesus Christ, because He paid for their sins. He redeemed them from the power of the devil, and they are connected to God with bonds of love. This is all wrought by God's Holy Spirit.

This Kingdom of God is growing here on Earth. It is growing because daily people are being converted. We can even say in Heaven His kingdom is also expanding because every day some of His people are ushered in

from Earth into Heaven. There they are with Him. The multitude in Heaven is daily growing. We can say that His kingdom is growing in Heaven, but especially here on Earth. That is what we are focused upon in this prayer. We are praying that His kingdom may expand here on Earth. We may believe that every day people are being converted throughout this world and that the Holy Spirit, by His powerful working, is gaining citizens for this Kingdom of God. The Lord is at work gathering sinners, and so this Kingdom is increasing. Therefore the Lord makes use of ministers, of office bearers, of elders and deacons. The Lord makes use of the testimony of His people, because all God's children are called to be witnesses. They are called to speak of the blessings of their King, but especially pastors are called to be faithful in the proclamation of His Word.

At times pastors may wonder, 'What is the use of all my labor? It seems so futile.' Yet, you may know, as Paul says at the end of 1 Corinthians 15, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (verse 58). The Lord makes use of the labors of His servants as they proclaim His kingdom. In a mighty manner, sometimes unnoticed by us, the Lord makes use of the proclamation of His Word by means of His servants. What a high calling it is, for they are called to be fellow laborers with Christ. It is glorious. It is the most blessed work a person can do. It is work that has everlasting impact. The Lord blesses His servants and strengthens them. Through their service, the Lord causes His kingdom to grow.

Now the Lord causes His kingdom to grow because of the reality of sin. Because the fact in our lives is that mankind is under the power and dominion of sin. People need to be delivered from that dominion. They are in the slavery of sin. They need to be washed and redeemed and led into a new life with Christ. Because of the presence of sin in this society and in our world, therefore there is an increase possible of the kingdom of God. Daily people are delivered from that slavery of sin and ushered into a life with Christ.

You must understand that there once was a day in history when the whole world belonged to the Kingdom of God. There was life and abundance, happiness and peace, but then sin entered our realm because man rebelled against God and chose the side of the devil. The results were horrible. Death and misery entered this world, and the Kingdom of God was broken here upon Earth.

Then God in His unexplainable love sent His Son that He would bear the consequences of sin and that He would pay the price, the penalty of sin. He conquered death. He earned, He merited the life-giving Holy Spirit. Actually, this kingdom started in the Old Testament. It was quite small then. It started with Adam and Eve, went on through Abel. Then the Lord started over again with Noah. When again the people of God had forsaken Him and when the world was engulfed in wickedness, then the Lord started again with Abraham and through Abraham, the people of Israel.

They received the light of God's Word. They were told that Messiah, the promised Savior, would come through them. When the Lord Jesus came, He said to the people in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." But we know what happened. Israel rejected the Lord Jesus, and Israel, together with the heathens, crucified the Lord Jesus. The whole of mankind did not want to bow for Christ.

After His resurrection and His ascension, God poured out His Holy Spirit. It was then that His apostles started to preach the kingdom of God throughout this world. Then the kingdom of God was extended throughout all nations. And so, although no one was asking for God and no one was seeking God, God would see to it that people would be converted, that there would again be a people here on Earth who would live in agreement to God's will, who would love God and honor His name. This glorious work of God, of saving sinners, will be carried on and continued until the end of the days.

Then at the final day, God will overthrow all His enemies. He will condemn Satan, and then the Lord God will establish His kingdom here on Earth. This Earth will be renewed. Heaven and Earth will be united together, and the Lord Jesus will reign forever with His people in glory and peace.

When we pray "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying that this glorious kingdom would come and that therefore now, in the time that lies between us and the final day of judgement, that God would extend His kingdom, that many people would be converted, that everywhere the Gospel would find entrance into people's lives. As we pray "Thy Kingdom come," we are actually praying that people would be delivered from false religions like Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. We are praying for the conversion of the Jews. We are praying that people in all places may learn to bow for the Lord Jesus as the only Savior, and so we are called to pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

Connected to this, we are also to pray for all those who suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus. We are praying for other people that they may be brought to conversion. We are praying that His church may be continued on in spite of man's ignorance, in spite of persecution and tribulations. As we remember people around us in prayer, we may believe that God will hear these prayers, that the Lord God will strengthen those who are imprisoned, those who suffer pain and shame for the name of Christ. We believe that God will convert people who are now ignorant of the Gospel. We confess and believe that God will cause sinners to be converted and that His people in their struggles will be strengthened.

As we ask the Lord for His kingdom to come, we pray that errors and heresies will be unmasked and that the power of godliness may be received by many. We pray that God's people would be revived and that all enemies of the church be overthrown, that all the wicked schemes of the devil be brought to nothing. This all belongs to the prayer "Thy Kingdom come."

How is your prayer life? Do we pray for people around us? Do we pray that others would also see this great salvation? Then it is also our duty to be a witness of this great salvation. Then we must also speak to others around us of this great salvation. We need to be a living example of godliness to them. That is the hardest part. It's hard to speak about the Lord Jesus, but it's much more difficult to be a living witness by our actions, by our demeanor. And so, connected to this prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," is the necessity that we would also be living witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ because really, it is so glorious to be delivered from the slavery of the devil and to be set free from all the winds of this world and to be delivered from a life of vanity and that emptiness would be changed into fullness and that we see the glory of God, that we learn to love Him. Then we have an aim in life.

As we consider this prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," we must also consider ourselves, whether we belong to His kingdom. That means does God's Spirit fill our lives? Has the Holy Spirit filled your life? When the Holy Spirit works in life, He shows that we have rebelled against God. He shows us that we have a heart that is against God, that we want to focus upon our own desires in life. The Holy Spirit uncovers us to our own guilt. He brings us low, and we see how inclined we are to go our own ways, even after having experienced grace, that we still so often seek our own will.

The Holy Spirit gives us then a desire to be humbled before God. The Holy Spirit teaches us to love God above all. When we are praying "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying that we ourselves would also belong to this kingdom. Actually, we could verbalize this petition by saying, "Rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee." And so, this petition, "Thy Kingdom come," shows us the need for personal obedience because God's kingdom takes place in our lives through obedience, humble obedience.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to be fully dependent upon the Lord God. Man, by nature, dreams about ruling his own life, but the Lord Jesus teaches people to pray, "Rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee." Is this also your prayer? Is this what motivates you? This must be our desire in life that we learn to have the Lord as our King, that He rules our lives, that He governs our lives. Have we learned to pray, "Lord, lead us to the glory of Thy name." Have we learned to pray, "Lord, glorify Thyself in our lives."

If it is that we do not know this prayer, then we still resist God, and we don't want Him to rule our lives. Then we are on our own. If we are without this King, if we do not belong to His realm, then we live on our own. Nobody will care for us. The devil certainly will not care for us. The world cannot care for us, and we are unable to care for ourselves. Who will then protect you from danger? Who will lead you through this life? Who will be with you when you have to die? Without bowing for the Lord Jesus in truth, you are cutting yourself off from the source of all life. This is a most miserable condition to be in.

See how good the Lord Jesus is, that nothing can separate God's people from His love, that He cares for them. When He is your King, you are never alone. He strengthens you. He leads you. How then does the Lord lead in life? He leads through His Word and through His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us to obey God according to His Word.

We also see this petition will be fulfilled. The fulfillment of this petition, "Thy Kingdom come," is seen in the lives of people who learn to obey Him. These people learn to love Christ. They love His church, and that is a manifestation of His kingdom. Then we desire to support God's church. We will see that sinners will follow Him. When we have been gained for the Lord Jesus, then we belong to His church, and we will love His church. We will care for her. We will support her. We will pray for her. We will also pray that His church will be delivered

from attacks of the evil one because the devil is always at work trying to hinder and stop the progress of God's kingdom. The devil is a great adversary and enemy of the Lord. He is always at work trying to ruin the church. He hates the church because he hates the King of the church. The devil does this because he is evil. When we pray "May Thy Kingdom come," then we are praying that God would overthrow the wicked plans of the devil.

In every possible way the devil will try to harm the church by persecution, by worldliness, by false religion. We are to pray that the Lord would sustain His people under persecution. As we pray "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying that the church that is getting lukewarm would be revived, that heresies may be overthrown. We are praying that everywhere His church may grow and be made healthy and strong. This is a prayer also against our own inclinations, against our lukewarmness, against our natural laziness. This petition accuses us ourselves personally that we are self-centered and that we are not focused upon His church as we should be.

As we pray "Thy Kingdom come," then we are actually praying, "Let my kingdom go down and let my honor be of little or no importance, but let Thy kingdom be established. Then Thy truth shall be acknowledged, and people will find eternal life and real salvation in Christ." We pray, "Glorify Thyself, oh Lord, in expanding and preserving Thy church and protecting her from all her enemies."

This petition will ultimately lead to the glory of God for God's kingdom must come. It will come. And then the Lord shall be all in all. He shall be everything to all God's people. This is the hope and the anticipation and the expectation of all God's people. Therefore, they have courage. Therefore, they continue on. They know His kingdom shall come. That's why our focus must not be upon our own ease or upon our own delights or upon our own prosperity, but let our desires be for the glory of God, for the extension of His kingdom. That sinners may be saved, that they may learn to love God above all.

Then our desire will be that God's glorious kingdom of light will come, and the devil and every enemy be vanquished. This will be reality in your life when the Lord has gained you for His kingdom. Then it cannot be otherwise but you long for the extension of His kingdom, that worldwide but also for the extension of His kingdom in your own life, that you will be more and more gained for Him. 'Teach me to do Thy will, oh Lord. Teach me to crucify my own flesh. Let the old man within me die, and teach me to bear the fruit of Thy Spirit that Thy kingdom would come within me. That Thy love, oh Lord, would constrain me. Teach me to be a blessing to others, although I am really nothing.'

Then you pray "Fill me with Thy Spirit, oh Lord, and open my lips that I may speak Thy Word." And so, you have peace in your heart. You have an aim in life; an Almighty power is on your side. He will fulfill that petition in your own life. God will receive glory in your life, and we long and believe that God will also be glorified in the lives of many other people. What a perspective this is when all sins shall be banished, when God's law will be fully implemented in the lives of His people, when God's people will be forever with Him in His glorious light in New Jerusalem with a new body, with a new name, with perfect new desires, when He will be their All-in-All. What a perspective that He has spoken, "Behold, I make all things new." That will be the final manifestation of His kingdom. That will last forever and ever. Nevermore any attacks. Never any more temptations. The devil will be overthrown. Then my sinful flesh is purified. There will be a new Earth in which righteousness shall dwell. This is what this Kingdom of God will amount to.

In Revelation 21, then John "saw a new Heaven and a new Earth: for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away" (verse 1). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (verse 4). This shall come to pass because it is founded on the death and resurrection of Christ unto Whom is given all power in Heaven and upon Earth, and so we may pray with expectation. We may pray with fervor. We may continue to pray constantly, "Thy Kingdom come." Thank you.

Lecture 5

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Welcome to lecture number five in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. We now wish to focus upon the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, and that is, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." Many people, when they consider this petition, draw a comparison to what the Lord Jesus endured in the garden of Gethsemane. There you know the Lord Jesus was in great turmoil because it was there and then that He felt the terrible torment of God coming towards Him. It was there that He was struggling in great darkness, and He was exceedingly fearful because He knew what was in store for Him. He had to endure the wrath of God, and that will be unleashed against Him in all its fullness. His soul was so burdened that He told His disciples in Mark 14 verse 34, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." It was then that He prayed, Mark 14 verse 36, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt," and so the Lord Jesus denied Himself. He said there, "Not My will be done, but Thy will be done, oh, My Father."

That is now often viewed as an interpretation of this third petition, and people understand this petition to mean that we must learn in our lives that we would deny ourselves and that God's will would be done in our hearts so that people learn to pray 'not My will, but Thy will be done.' Well, certainly there are days in our lives that we go through certain struggles, that we would like to go in a certain direction in life, and that we are taught by God to see that not our will, but His will be done; and so, there can be days in our life that we do not understand God's guidance, and then there is a need for humility and that we also pray, "Lord, not my will, but Thy will be done."

That is a prayer of self-denial, and that is perfectly necessary and legitimate and true, but yet, that is not the full interpretation of this third petition. We can say it is a part of this petition, but the real meaning of this petition is that we will pray in this petition that we and other people learn to do the will of God positively. So, it's not in the first place that we learn to deny ourselves, but it is, positively, that we learn to live according to God's will in all of our lives.

What does God want us to do? It is God's will for us that we would love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. It is God's will that we would love our neighbor as ourselves. This is what the Lord Jesus explains in Matthew 22. This is God's will, His revealed will for our lives; and so, when we pray, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," we are praying that people would learn to live according to God's will, that they would learn to live according to God's revealed will, that they would love God in everything they do and their neighbor as themselves. It is a positive prayer. It's a prayer that will take our life long because continually, we need to learn to walk in the ways of God.

This petition starts then by referring to Heaven, “Thy will be done as it is in Heaven.” So, God’s will is done in Heaven, and what does that mean “in Heaven”? Who are in Heaven? That’s where the angels are and that’s where God’s redeemed church is, but in Heaven, there the angels continually are listening to God. They are obeying God. They’re always obedient and faithful to do that what God tells them to do. Just as the angels are always obedient to God, so the Lord Jesus tells us that we also on Earth should always be doing the things God wants us to do, and so this petition refers to practical matters in daily life. We are referring here to our daily calling. The Lord wants us to live according to His will and that we would do that with all diligence. Then again, we think of the angels. They, without any murmuring, obey His will. We also should do that, that we would follow His beckoning, His will, His direction, that we would obey God just as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in Heaven.

We see an example of living according to God’s will in the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole of His life was focused upon God, but we see that already as a child. When the Lord Jesus was a boy of 12 years old, He was in the temple and He loved to be there. He was there three days, and He spoke with the teachers and He asked them questions. They asked Him questions. Oh, it was His desire and love to be in His Father’s business. He spoke with the doctors of the law. It was His delight. When His mother and Joseph were anxiously looking for Him, He had to return to Nazareth and then He would no longer be able to stay in the temple. He had to obey. It was God’s will for Him at this stage of His life.

We read in Luke 2 verse 51, “And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them.” He was doing the will of God that He was called to do. There in Nazareth, He had daily work. He was a carpenter’s son, and so He would be trained as a carpenter. This was His calling, and He accepted it. He had to work in that dusty village, that back wood village of Nazareth, far away from the house of His Father, but He did it without murmuring. He did it with devotion. He was dedicated to the work the Lord gave Him to do, and we may be assured that the Lord Jesus was a good carpenter, that He performed good work because He knew this is God’s will for Him. So you, in your daily work, are called to do that well and to do that in a diligent manner.

That is God’s will in our daily lives, but then there’s also obedience in spiritual life because we learn to do the will of God and live according to His directions. Reality is that we are fallen creatures. We have fallen away from God and, therefore, our will has become perverted. We desire to do our own will and not God’s will. I am inclined to hate God and my neighbor, and so I rebel against the will of God. That’s my nature, my corrupt nature. Now our will must be changed. The entire mechanism inside of us leads us in the opposite direction away from God, and now God’s Holy Spirit must enter our lives and He must lead us in the direction of God. The Holy Spirit gives people a new heart. He removes the heart of stone, gives them a heart of flesh, and so people receive God’s Holy Spirit in their lives and then their will is changed. That enmity between God and them is broken. Their will is curbed, and now they long to do the will of God. They are moved by the love of God.

This is all by the work of God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit shows you your depravity and guilt, and the Holy Spirit renews you. And has that already happened in your life? Who leads your life? Who leads your will? Who directs you? We’re either being directed by the Prince of Darkness or by the King of kings. Is God leading your life? Has He renewed your will? Ask God for His Holy Spirit to work powerfully in you. You cannot change your own heart. You cannot renew your own will, but God can do it. He can renew you. When God’s Spirit enters your life, what happens then? Well, then you cannot live on as you used to live. You see that you miss God. You become restless. You need to live according to God’s will.

You see this, and the Holy Spirit is thereby drawing you with bonds of loving kindness, and He leads you to pray, “Teach me, oh, Lord, to do Thy will.” You don’t trust your own insight anymore. You don’t want to do your own will anymore. You need God to strengthen you, and you see that you are weak. You need His grace and that not only once, but throughout your life, for repeatedly we are inclined to go our own way, but we need to go in God’s way. That’s why Psalm 86 says, “Unite my heart to the fear of Thy name” (verse 11), because by nature our heart is like the fingers of our hand, and our heart is directed into all kinds of various directions, but now all these fingers must come together that we learn to do God’s will: “Unite my heart to the fear of Thy name.” Then the image of the Lord Jesus is laid upon you, and you display the fruits of the Holy Spirit. You delight to do His will, and on Earth that is only a beginning. You will perfectly learn to do God’s will when you are with the Lord in glory. There your will will be renewed.

If we resist this God and shake off His call upon our lives, know that you will surely perish. Those who resist God and refuse to do His will and go against Him and do not deny themselves, they will surely perish. Oh, it's such a blessing to surrender to this God. It's such a blessing to learn to forsake your own will and to do His will. It is so blessed when the Lord takes over your life, and He teaches you to walk according to His ways. Then you pray continually, "Teach me to do Thy will, oh Lord."

As we see that so often we go against God, then confess this before Him. Maybe you failed, maybe many a time. Don't rest in your failings, and don't stay away from God. Don't fall short of Christ, but confess your failures and seek His grace to do His will in your life. When we are called to pray, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," then we are praying that we personally would learn to live according to God's will. That is a lifelong struggle, but then we are also praying for other people and that's a Christian calling to pray for one another. We are then praying that God's will shall also be done in the lives of other people. Again, we do not mean that God's sovereign guidance and ruling will take place in their lives because God's governing rule will take place regardless, but we are praying that other people will learn to bow for God's will, that they will more and more learn to surrender their lives unto the Lord God. That is what we refer to as intercessory prayer.

We must be men and women of prayer. John Bunyan portrays this beautifully in his majestic work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There he shows us a picture of a man who was portrayed on a painting and his eyes were lifted up to Heaven. The best of books was in his hand. The law of truth was written upon his lips. The world was behind his back, and he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head. This is a picture of a Christian. He does not live for the world anymore. He abides by God's holy revelation. He is a man of prayer.

A Christian should pray for people around him. Before everything else, a Christian must pray, and so we pray for God's work in our own lives and hearts, but we also pray that God's work would take place in the lives and hearts of people who are around us. We find this repeatedly emphasized in Scripture. Prayer is a certain power. The Apostle Paul was convinced of the power of prayer, although it's all grace, although we have no power, but we are calling upon God, Who has all power, to teach other people to live according to His will. People, your own family, maybe your husband or wife, maybe your parents or your children, maybe others around you, others you are acquainted with, others you witness to, God is able to change their lives that they also learn to do God's will, that they do this gladly and joyfully. God can change their hearts. He is willing to hear prayer.

The Apostle Paul emphasized prayer. We find that repeatedly in Romans 15:30, "I beseech you, brethren, . . . that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Paul himself needed prayer. He needed to be taught to do God's will. He needed to be led further in the ways of salvation and so also in Ephesians 6:19-20, praying "for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly . . . that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." In 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course." Hebrews 13:18, "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." Paul needed prayers of people around him because he believed God would hear such prayer, and so he himself prayed much for other people around him. This is a Christian's calling to pray for other people that they would be converted, that they would learn to do God's will.

This is a personal prayer that we must know in our private lives, but besides this, this prayer that people would learn to do God's will is also a prayer offered up by the church, and that's why we should come together as congregations to pray that other people would learn to do God's will. The Lord delights to see His people gathered together for such prayer, and we find this beautifully worded in Psalm 87. We read there in verse 2 the following words, "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

What does this text mean? What are the gates of Zion? That is the place of the official corporate gatherings of the people of God. These gates were wide. They were broad. People could gather there. To sit in the gate of a city meant that such a person was a member of the city council, for instance, Lot. He sat in the gates of Sodom, and Boaz gathered 10 men around him to be seated in the gates of Bethlehem as he wanted to secure Ruth to be his bride. The gates of Zion, they formed the gathering places of God's people, and so this refers to the public worship services of the church. There prayer is offered. Corporate prayer is offered together by the people of God.

The expression "dwellings of Jacob" refers to the individual homes of the people of God. There also they offer prayer to the Lord, and that prayer is effectual, and the Lord hears such prayer. They do not pray in vain, but Scripture tells us that the Lord has a special delight in the prayers of His people when they are gathered together

in official worship services, and so this text, “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,” is a great encouragement that churches would meet together for corporate prayer. These prayers are to be for the extension of God’s kingdom and that sinners would learn to do God’s will, that people would be gained for Christ, that their hearts would be renewed, that His Word would enter their lives so that God would be glorified.

Is this not what the Lord Jesus meant in Matthew 18:19, “That if two of you shall agree on Earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.” This shows again the need for communal, corporate prayer. The Lord has a delight that His people would come together in unison to offer prayer before the Lord. He hears such prayers.

Also, this petition, “Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven,” belongs to our personal prayers, as well, that we would personally strive in prayer, that we learn to do God’s will, but that also other people close by and far away also learn to do God’s will. This prayer is essential. This prayer is necessary. It’s hard work. It takes time. It takes self-denial, but it’s most important because God hears prayer, and He incorporates your prayers in His plan of salvation. Your prayers make a difference.

You see, we cannot change one person. We cannot convert one sinner. That’s God’s work, and God will do it. He will do marvelous things while you are just watching, while you are not even involved, but you have prayed for it. God hears, and He does it also in His own way, at His own time, but God hears prayer. There are numerous examples in church history, and maybe you know that of your own life, how you were praying for conversion of someone else and the Lord heard that prayer because the Lord is faithful. As you pray to Him, He is listening. He takes your prayers seriously, and He’s more than able and more than willing to grant you your request and, therefore, pray with expectation. We think of that text from 2 Chronicles 16:9, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” That means God looks for those who look unto Him, who pray for things to happen that they cannot do themselves. Therefore, pray with expectation.

Pray also with zeal. Pray in the awareness that you are calling upon the greatest power in existence, the power of God Almighty, and that He has promised to hear such prayer. Be earnest in your prayers. Take the Kingdom of Heaven with violence. Think of Jacob pleading with the Lord at Peniel in Genesis 32:26, “I will not let thee go, unless thou dost bless me.” Think of Daniel pleading in Daniel 9:19, “Oh Lord, hear; Oh, Lord, forgive; Oh Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, Oh my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.” Pray also with faith, for in Mark 11:24 we read, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Pray in faith.

Be also particular in prayer. Be particular when you lay needs of other people before the Lord, when you see how hardened they may be, when you see how indifferent they may be. Lay it all before God. A person who is so engaged in prayer will be a wall of fire around a country, around a church, around a family. A prayer of some child of God who is all alone, maybe in prison or maybe bound to his home, when he prays, that prayer can be of such a force by the grace of God. The enemies of the gospel fear such prayer. That’s why the devil assaults and attacks people who are engaged in prayer.

The queen of Scotland, in the day of the Protestant Reformation, was afraid of the prayers of John Knox, the Scottish godly reformer. She was more afraid of his prayers than of a whole army of soldiers. The son-in-law of John Knox was also a minister, John Welch. He was known to get up in the middle of the night and to plead with God in prayer, and his wife at one occasion was afraid that her husband would catch a cold, and she followed him into the room into which he had withdrawn himself. She heard him pleading in broken sentences, “Lord, will Thou grant me Scotland.” He was praying that God’s will be done, that Scottish people would learn to do the will of God. He was praying for their conversion, and that’s what this prayer actually means, “Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” ‘Lord, convert sinners.’

Let us know such boldness in our prayers. You may pray for things you think are too wonderful, too amazing, but [they are] what God will do to those who wait upon Him. Let us therefore know boldness in our prayers, and let us seek souls for our hire and that salvation would be overflowing through God’s work. Especially pastors should pray that sinners would learn to do the will of God. How we see it in Scripture that especially pastors were men of prayer, how Samuel pleaded with God for the people, and he did not want to give this up. Although the people were disobedient and were unwilling and were often in rebellion against the Lord, still Samuel saw it as

his task to continually pray for the people of Israel that they would learn to do the will of God. In 1 Samuel 12:23, we hear Samuel praying, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.” Samuel continued on teaching the ways of the Lord, and he coupled his teaching with private, personal, fervent, bold prayer. Samuel did not want to stop praying, for he saw this as his most important work: intercessory prayer.

We think of another example of a man of God, Jeremiah, who prayed for the people of Judah. He suffered greatly under their wickedness, but he did not neglect to pray for them until the measure of their iniquity was so full that the Lord told them that he should no longer pray for these people in Jeremiah 7:16, “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me: for I will not hear thee.”

We find an example in Hezekiah, the glorious, good king of Judah, when he was in great need because the Assyrians had surrounded the city of Jerusalem. Then he asks the prophet Isaiah to pray for the people, but we also see that he himself went into the temple, and he laid down the letters that the Assyrian king had given to him telling him that he should not trust in God, and he laid it all before the Lord, and he prayed and he interceded, and he prayed that God would deliver His people, keep them from harm, and that God would be honored. He prayed for the wellbeing of the people of Judah and so we see it in the life of Daniel, that he prayed for the people.

We see it so often in the lives of the apostles, that they prayed for the people. We see that, for instance, in Acts chapter 6, they were kept so busy by ministering to the needs of widows that they realized that their main work would suffer, that was prayer and abiding in the Word of God, and so they told the congregation to choose seven men who would be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, that they would care for the needs of the widows. The apostles said in verse 4, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” They saw it as their main task to be engaged in prayer.

Think of how the Apostle Peter went up unto the roof as was his custom to pray. It was around noon when he was praying, and what did they pray for? They prayed that God’s will would be done in their own lives and the lives of other people, that people would be converted, because pastors should have a raging thirst for sinners’ souls, that so God’s Kingdom would come, that so sinners would learn to do God’s will, and that God’s name would be glorified.

See how the Apostle Paul prayed extensively for the churches. He did not only lead personal prayer for himself. He did not only ask other people to pray for him, but he himself prayed extensively for the churches. When you read his epistles, you must see and come under the deep impression of how much he must have prayed. In 1 Corinthians 1:4–5, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” In Philippians 1:4, “Always, in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” In Philippians 1:9, “And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” Paul was praying that their love would increase. He was praying that they would do God’s will.

The same in Colossians 1:9, “We do not cease to pray for you, and we desire that you might be fulfilled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” 2 Thessalonians 1:11, “Also we pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.” He was praying that these Christians at Thessalonica would be faithful to God, and so he was praying for the extension of God’s Kingdom and that people would learn to do the will of God. All God’s children should lift up this prayer, “Lord, teach people to do Thy will. Teach me to do Thy will, that Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” Thank you.

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.

Lecture 7

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

Welcome to this lecture, lecture number seven, in the series of the Beauty of Prayer.

Every day we transgress God's Commandments. Every day we fall short, and therefore the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

To "forgive our debts," that obviously means that we would receive forgiveness for all our sins we commit against God because man needs forgiveness, remission of all his sins; Scripture is very clear about that. In Psalm 14:1, "There is none that doeth good." This is repeated in Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, no, not one." And so many texts refer us to the fact that we are sinful people. Psalm 130:3, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?"

And all the sacrificial laws in the Old Testament, they point us to the necessity that man must receive forgiveness of sins. And then, John the Baptist preached, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament because a sacrifice must be brought because we have sinned against God. That's the main problem of man: sin. That's our biggest problem in life. Sin is always alive, but sin leads us to death and misery.

And so, daily new bitter fruits are brought forth from the tree of sin. And therefore, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts." Daily we are called to confess our sins before the Lord. And daily we are to acknowledge our corruption before Him. In ourselves, we are carnal, sold under sin. And therefore, it's a miracle that the Almighty, Holy God is still willing to hear us and to listen to us. And so, we are called to really humble ourselves and confess our sins.

And in doing that, we should be very concrete. We should mention certain sins we have committed. We must confess before the Lord our actual daily sins, the words we have spoken that we should not have spoken, attitudes that were sinful towards our wives or children or towards our husbands.

And so, we are also to confess our natural inclination to evil. We are to confess our natural corruption that we have sinned in Adam. That's where sin started also in our lives. And now we have natures that are inclined to hate God and our neighbor. Our understanding is darkened, [and] we are blind to God and to His honor. And really, the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man because they must be discerned spiritually.

It is necessary to confess the stubbornness of our will and that we do not obey the voice of God. Even the imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts are evil (Genesis 6:5) and it has been so from our youth. We should set our affections upon heavenly things, but so often we look at the things of this world and they fill our lives and we

so easily follow deceit and vanity. We have forsaken the Fountain of Living Water. And also, we, in our natural inclinations, prefer broken containers that can hold no water.

We can even have been raised in a Christian church, but [it can be] that our hearts are not right before God, that we are still unwilling to bow and to surrender unto the Lord, then we have been planted as trees in the garden of the Lord, but we have brought forth no fruit. We are barren and deserve to be cast into the fire. The Lord has looked for fruit, and we have brought forth bad fruit.

And so, this is our sinful nature. And this is what we must confess before God. And when we are very concrete in the confessing of our sins, then we will also realize how necessary and how blessed is the fact that God forgives sins. And when we experience forgiveness of sins and we confess our shortcomings before God, then at the same time we should also ask for grace to fight against sins that we would not commit such sins again.

And so, these are the great matters in life that can bother a person: his sins, his iniquity. Oh, if we dwell on this matter, how much is there in our lives that we should not just brush over, but let us focus on that for a moment. How impatient we can be. Oh, that we can break out in unjust anger. We can have hearts that are covetous. We desire the things of the world. There can be pride within us. We can be ungrateful for God's goodness. We can murmur under afflictions. We can distrust the living God. We can be harsh towards our neighbor. We can be indifferent to his needs. We can be judgmental to those around us. We can be, spiritually speaking, lazy. And backsliding, and lukewarmness can set in. Who can control his tongue? And of every idle word that men will speak, they must give an account. And so, by our attitude, by our deeds, and by our words, we are all condemned.

And you know, sin has never made a person happy. No one is ever glad at the results of sin in his life. The greatest joy is to honor God. But if we do not honor God, that's great misery. And so, sins are a reality in our lives, and we find that repeatedly in Scripture. The Lord accuses us of our sinful nature. The Lord even has to complain about his people, Israel, that He has raised them. He said, "I have raised children and they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1:2). And that is our sorrow in daily life. This is what caused the Apostle Paul to groan, "Wretched man that I am. That which I desire not to do, that's what I do" (Romans 7).

And so, we read in Scripture that so often God's people confess their sins. Yes, not only the unconverted ones who come before the Lord with repentance, but also God's people after they have fallen into sin. Look at David, a man according to God's heart. In 2 Samuel 24:10 he confesses, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done. And now I beseech you, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

And the godly priest, Ezra in 9:6 says, "Oh my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens."

We hear of Daniel in Daniel 9:5, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." Daniel doesn't say "the people did that" or "our fathers did that," but "we have done that." He includes himself in it, and he is not exaggerating. He knows we have sinned.

And so the Apostle Paul says, "I am the least of the apostles because I have persecuted the Church of God," in 1 Corinthians 15:9. Although God has forgiven that sin, that awareness of that sin still remains upon him. That gives him cause for humility.

Look also at Luke 15 where the lost son says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am not worthy to be called your son" (verse 21). And as we plead for forgiveness of sins, we may do that because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus. But Romans 3 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24).

And also, the Apostle John says in 1 John 1 & 2, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. . . . If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation," the payment, "for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 1:8-10 and I John 2:1-2).

So, Scripture is very clear that we may receive forgiveness of our sins through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in prayer we must confess our sins.

It can be that you are still living outside of Christ, that you are not a child of God, that you are not reconciled to Him. And every moment, God can take you out of this life, and you are still in your sins. You are hanging on

a thread above the pit of hell, and you will surely drop in hell if you die unreconciled to God. You need to repent. You need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You need God the Holy Spirit to convict you, to draw you, to save you. You must be united to Christ. You must become a partaker of Christ and of all His blessings. And so you will be saved and justified. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins will be forgiven.

When you have been led to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, then your sins are forgiven. Then you are incorporated in Christ. You have been declared righteous in the sight of God. You are an heir of heaven, and everlasting life is now already within you. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And this is the wonderful exchange, the glorious blessing: that God gives lost sinners new life, hope which is true.

And so, the apostle rejoices in Ephesians 1:6-7, "He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." That is a glorious reality for a child of God.

But why then does the Lord Jesus teach here also His children to pray daily, "Forgive us our debts"? People who believe in the Lord Jesus have hearts that are now led to seek God. They love God. They desire to walk in God's ways. The Holy Spirit is leading them in a life of devotion to God. The setting of their heart has been changed. There's a new nature within them. Their sins are forgiven. And yet, the Lord Jesus calls them to pray daily, "Forgive us our debts." Why must they still pray that? Because God's children still sin every day. Daily, they still violate God's laws. They cannot keep even one of God's commandments fully. And so, they need to acknowledge to God that they still sin.

They must confess them because they must confess who they are and what they do. And so, they must ask God to forgive them their daily fallings and stumblings. And at the same time, ask God for grace that they would fight against sin, against the devil and his whole dominion. They need to be brought in a life of dedication to the Lord.

And so, they need to pray daily, "Forgive us our debts." They need to be made right with God again after they have fallen into sin. And you know, along these terms the Lord Jesus becomes increasingly precious to us. For every day again we realize that it is because of Christ's sake that our sins can be forgiven. We need Him every day.

And so, this petition, "forgive," is the breath of a believing soul. It comes forth from a heart that is very much conscious of its own misery and sinfulness. And so, they become meek and lowly of heart. They become trusting in the Lord Jesus. And so, this prayer will continue in this life till our last breath. And then it will be changed into eternally praising God, for in heaven there will be no more sin.

And again, let us realize that all this forgiveness is only possible because of the Lord Jesus and His perfect sacrifice. The Lord Jesus paid for the sins of all His people. And what a precious reality it is to you, then, to know Him as your High Priest at the right hand of God Who is interceding for you. He is ready to pray for all those who come unto God through Him. He is a compassionate, precious High Priest, and He alone can be the Sacrifice and the Priest. And He is the full payment of our sins. And so, we see in Christ that the Lord delights in mercy, that He delights to give forgiveness.

And that's how He revealed Himself to Moses. In Exodus 34:6-7, "And the Lord passed by Moses and proclaimed, the LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." God forgives sin. And so, the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and let him turn to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." And Nehemiah writes in 9:17, "Thou art a God ready to pardon." This is how God is. This is His character, His desire. But He is also a God of justice.

It can only be done, this forgiveness of sins, through the finished work of Christ, and He invites sinners to come to Him. Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Let us never say that our sins are too enormous and our transgressions are too great. We may cast all our sins down before His throne.

And the Apostle John encourages us in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness." You see the order here in this text? First, we confess our sins, and then we receive forgiveness of sin. So, therefore if you see your sins, confess them. Regardless how great they

may be, confess them; and the Lord is still willing to cleanse you and to deliver you. And therefore Psalm 32 tells us, "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (verse 5). The Lord forgives.

The Lord can also chastise because of sins. David did terrible sins in his life, and he received forgiveness of them, but he was still chastised because of them. God does that so that they would realize the enormity of their sin, that they would flee from their sin and never even think about committing this sin again. That's why the sword never left David's house, because of his sins that he had committed with Bathsheba and how he had let her husband, Uriah, be put to death. But his sins were forgiven.

And so, in all our daily failures, in all the carelessness in religious life, in the midst of all our lost opportunities when we have wasted our time, when we have neglected Scripture, when we have forsaken personal prayer, and when we even have our excuses for sinning, and when we have listened to the tempter, and when we have sought our own honor, and when we see shades of evil blending with all our daily activities, when we have been harsh to other people, when we have grieved the Holy Spirit, we must pray, "Pardon mine iniquities, Oh Lord, for they are many and great" (Psalm 25:11).

This must be the daily prayer in our lives, "Forgive us our debts." And if you neglect this prayer, you will become proud and presumptuous. You will become hardened and indifferent. And you would be in serious backsliding. God shall hide His face from you, and the Spirit will remove Himself from you. And the end result may be that it may turn out that you never knew the grace of Christ in your heart and that you are still in your sins.

So this petition, "Forgive us our debts," is only possible because of the finished work of Christ on Calvary. Oh, delight yourself in humbling [yourself] before Him. His love poured out in the heart will constrain you. And at the feet of Christ, you will experience sweetness. There you will see how precious the Savior is Who gave Himself for you. And you will melt in love and adoration because He forgives sin, because He bled and died on the cross for you, that He endured the hellish agonies so that you would never have to be there, and that He was forsaken of God so that you would never be forsaken of God. It's His glory, His goodness.

And that causes Micah 7:18 to break out in adoration, "Who is God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy." And this high priest causes new joy to flow in your life when you have confessed your sins and you again receive remission of your sin. Your conscience is set free, and the blessed peace of Christ flows into your heart, and you love your Savior more and more, and that's why you want to pray this petition every day again, "Forgive us our debts."

And so, this petition is, "Forgive us our debts." Again, we see the plural form. We must not be concerned only about our own sins, but also for the sins of others. We need to mourn and grieve for our own sins, but also for their sins. We must also confess the sins that others do and beg God if God would intervene in their lives and awaken them that they would see their sin and also confess them, and we may not be partakers of other men's sins.

We must not also think ourselves to be higher than other people. No, we must beg grace of God in our own heart that we would see how sinful we are. Then we become, in our own estimation, more sinful than other people because then we know our hearts. And so, we become humble, also when we pray for other people that they would be delivered from their sins.

Job, he offered up prayers because of the sins of his children. And did Moses not pray for forgiveness of sins for the children of Israel? Think of how Nehemiah and Daniel prayed for forgiveness of sins. And so, we pray, "Forgive us our debts." We pray for the sins of others that the Lord would forgive them.

But then there's something added to this and that is that we find, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The Lord calls us to forgive those who transgress against us. You see, if we need forgiveness and we ask God to forgive us our transgressions against Him, then we must also be willing to forgive the sins of others against us. And we will all come into certain circumstances in life when we see how people have done evil against us. And then our nature is that we would want to take revenge, that we would become angry. But the spirit of Christ teaches otherwise. He teaches us to be humble and meek. That we would pray for those who mistreat us. That we would yet seek their well-being.

The Lord Jesus explains this necessity in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." If we are unwilling to forgive the sins of other people, God will not forgive us our sins.

And realize in this whole matter that what we have done to God is far worse than what our fellow human beings have done to us. And here we see the real test: if we are sorry for our sins. And if we really need this forgiveness of God, if we are truly sorry for our sins, we will also be willing to remove the burden of guilt from other people who come to us and ask forgiveness. Then we are willing to forgive them.

If you know the grace of Christ in your own life and you live through His forgiving love, you will also forgive others. Sad to say, there are still many people who harbor grudges against one another. Even within the Christian church. Even among those who confess to know grace; then one says that he lives by grace, and one proclaims that he lives by the forgiving mercy of God, but yet he himself shows no mercy to those around him. And he himself does not show grace and is not gracious to them. That cannot be. That's absolutely wrong. When you know yourself as a sinner, and even as Paul said, as the chief of sinners, then you will be mild and meek towards others. Then you will say, "Lord, I have done so much evil against thee, I am ashamed of myself." And then you will be quick to forgive others what they have done against you.

You know, if God would enter into judgment with you, you could not stand before His throne. You need His grace and mercy. And as you realize this, you're also willing to forgive your neighbor. God forgives me my sins that I should also forgive the sins of others. And think also of how the Lord Jesus prayed, "Forgive us."

Now the Lord Jesus prayed that those who committed evil against Him, that they would receive forgiveness. He prayed, "Father, forgive them." He lifted up this prayer. If the Lord Jesus did that, how much more should we pray? And when God forgives immediately, let us also pray, let us also forgive immediately. Let us also be willing, from our heart, to forgive. There must be a sincere forgiveness of our heart.

We cannot worship God with a clean and true heart while there is an unforgiving attitude towards an offending brother. Therefore, ask grace of God to mortify grudges we may have and that the Lord would remove from us the desire of revenge. We don't have to avenge ourselves. If someone has done evil against you, God will see it. He will visit it. That's why Paul says in Romans 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'" Then you can even feel sorry for those who hurt you, and you can forgive them because if they have not found forgiveness for their sins before God, then they will be punished, and then you feel sorry for them.

If we resist and hold fast resentment, then God will not forgive us our sins. But maybe someone has hurt you. How can you get rid of that? By looking unto Jesus. Where you see what God has forgiven you and how He has forgiven those who trespassed against Him. Then He will also teach you that same spirit and teach you that attitude in life so that you learn to pray from your heart, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Thank you.

Lecture 8

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Welcome to this lecture number eight in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. Today we hope to consider the petition the Lord Jesus teaches us when the Lord Jesus tells us, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Last time, we considered the petition: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Now, if it is a reality in your life that you know of forgiveness of sins, and the peace you have experienced that God removed all the guilt from your life and washed you from your sins, then it cannot be otherwise, but you long to live according to His will. Then the love of God enters your heart. The Lord has been so good to me. Then you wish to live for Him, and you hate all kinds of sin, and you want to flee from sin, and you want to cut out sin from your life.

At the same time, you will quickly realize that you just cannot cut out sin from your life because sin is always close by. Scripture says sin lies at the door (Genesis 4:7). You can easily stumble, and then you fall again into sin. If it is spiritually well with you, you will hate that you still do sin. It’s a struggle, isn’t it? It’s an ongoing battle in life. It needs to be fought every day again. It’s a struggle against all kinds of sin, not just against one or two forms of sin that can be predominant, certain sins that you are struggling with.

But it’s not just a battle against one or two sins. It’s a battle against all manner of sin. It’s a mark of a heart that has been renewed by God’s Spirit, when you fight against all manner of sin. But if you do not have a renewed heart, then you do not know this battle. You see, it’s like with fish. Dead fish float along with the current, while living fish swim up against the current. When the Lord has renewed your life, you will resist sin. He teaches you to do that. Then often you will go against what other people are doing. You will not join in with their sins, for you have been taught by God to flow up against the current of sin and temptation. That’s a heavy battle. How can a person continue in that battle? By remembering this prayer, and by saying it often in your life: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

What is temptation? Temptation is an attempt to lead someone to stumble into a snare, or to let someone fall into a pit. By cruelty and deceit, you let someone fall into sin. That’s now exactly something the devil wants to do. He does it himself. He can also cause other people to lead you into temptation, and to let you fall into sin. He can also use your own heart, that your heart would tempt you, and your sinful desires would tempt you to do something sinful. You know, when sin breaks through in our life, and when it comes to completion, then misery and death, even eternal death can be the result.

When we look at this matter of temptation, we must distinguish between temptations and trials. You see, the devil tempts to sin, but God never tempts to sin. God can give trials in one’s life. James shows us this clearly

in chapter 1:13–15: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

You see, the devil will lead to sin, but God will never lead a person to sin. The Lord can purge and purify His people by means of chastisements and by leading them into certain trials and struggles. In this way, they are exercised to godliness, just like a soldier is also trained and exercised by hardships and trials. And so, the Lord can also lead His people into certain struggles and trials because gold must be purified, because it is gold. So, the life of faith must be purified, because it is faith.

We see this happening in the lives of various children of God in Scripture. Think of the trial that Abraham went through in Genesis 22:2, where the Lord told him: “Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” What a trial. That’s impossible. How can a man slay or sacrifice his own son? This was a test that God used to increase the faith of Abraham. Now Abraham believed and trusted God so fully that he was willing to do this. So, he took Isaac and wood and fire, and they went to the mountain. How the devil must have assaulted him with temptations to forsake God and to turn away from God’s calling. The devil must have told him, “You have money. Buy land and live here with the Canaanites, and spare your son, and forget about God and all His promises of salvation. How can God ask you to do a thing like this?” But Abraham resisted these temptations, and he persevered in this trial. He believed God, so Abraham’s faith was strengthened. The Lord led him through.

You see, the Lord puts those whom He loves through certain trials in life. He does it for their wellbeing, because all things must work together for those who love God. And so, the Lord chastises whom He loves, and through these chastisements, their faith is strengthened. Think of Hebrews 12:6–7: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” The Lord can allow the devil to tempt His people. The aim of the devil is to lead to destruction. The aim of God is to strengthen the life of faith. Then you are led to realize more and more your weakness and how dependent you are upon God. Likewise, you see more the need of His cleansing blood in your life. So, you see the value of Christ more and more.

We see more examples of trials of God in Scripture, for instance, Job. The devil received permission to tempt Job. God had allowed the devil to afflict Job but not to take his life. Finally, when Job had lost his health, he was in great turmoil, but still, he trusted in God. He was led to humble himself before God, and to acknowledge that God is still just and righteous in all His ways and works, and we hear then Job confessing his own weakness and inability before the Lord. He confesses his sinfulness in Job 42:5–6: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Through these great trials, Job’s faith was strengthened. In the end, it was far better with Job than before.

Another clear example is in the Lord Jesus Himself, Who fasted for 40 days and nights in the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. Finally, the devil came with great, severe temptations, tempting the Lord Jesus to give up His work as Savior. In Matthew 4:1, “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” But now the Lord Jesus also had the opportunity to display His power and to tell the devil of his pending defeat.

So, temptations and trials are a reality, and we must understand this petition [that] the Lord Jesus teaches us, “Lead us not into temptation.” It means on the one hand that the Lord would deliver us from falling into temptation, that the Lord would keep temptations from us. And on the other hand, it is that when these temptations would come by God’s guidance, that I would be upheld and sustained, that the Lord would support me, that I would resist and fight against sin, and do that my life long, because the reality is that under these attacks of the prince of darkness, I am weak, and I need His strength. So, temptations are a great reality in the lives of God’s children.

We see that more often in Scripture: temptations. Think of Lot. He went to live in the city of Sodom, although he knew the people there were wicked people, but the land there was so fertile. The land was green and lush. It was a temptation for him. David, walking on the roof of his house, and he watched Bathsheba bathing herself. Solomon was weakened by his wives to commit idolatry. We see Peter sitting among the servants of the high

priest's court. We see Abraham, who lied because he was afraid that they would kill him, so he said [of] his wife, "She is just my sister." We even see Jeremiah in all his sufferings and grief, and he cursed the day of his birth. These are all examples of God's children falling and stumbling into temptations, and these were all people who belonged to God, who had been purchased by the Lord. They had been redeemed by God's grace. They had tasted the forgiving grace of Christ, and they knew the love of God in their hearts, but they also fell in certain temptations, because there are times when vicious battles can erupt in the soul and in the mind of God's children. Therefore, we need to know this prayer: "Lead us not into temptation."

It's necessary that we resist these temptations, that we fight the good fight of faith. We need God's strength. We need the Lord to protect us, because don't think that you have the power to overcome certain sins, and when you are no longer tempted by certain sins, don't think that you have overcome that sin. It's God Who is keeping you from these temptations, that you don't think about it anymore. That's not because of you. It's God's grace.

And so, we need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," because the reality is that the life of a Christian is under assault. There are three enemies fighting against God's children. What are these enemies? They are the devil, the world, and our own wicked heart. The devil is the ruler of this world, and he rallies the world to assault God's children. Man still has a sinful heart, inclined to all wickedness, even after you have received grace. Think of David, what he did in his life. So, all these wicked inclinations are not annulled, totally removed by conversion. It's true, in conversion the power of sin has received a mortal blow, but the inclinations are still there, and at times they can erupt, and the aim is to cause God's children to fall. These three enemies are mortal enemies. They seek our death, our destruction, our doom. The devil, the world, and your own flesh seek your destruction. The devil will never cease to assault God's children because he is their mortal enemy, and together with the temptations of the world and the inclinations of our own heart, the devil attacks God's children.

You know, it's so sad, but by nature we are friends with the devil, the world, and our own carnal heart. We soon listen to what they tell us. These three mortal enemies must become our enemy, and no longer our friends, and that will only happen when God intervenes, when God gives us a taste for spiritual matters, when He renews our heart. The Lord announced that already in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This enmity is laid in the hearts of all those whom God draws out of the realm of darkness to the kingdom of His light. He draws them by the power of His love. He sheds light in their souls, teaches them to live by love. Their eyes are open. They see the reality of their lives, that they are by nature following the inclinations of the evil one. They feel the burden of that guilt. They see goodness in the service of God, and now they wish to follow Him all the days of their life. And then, enmity is laid in their heart against this three-fold enemy: the devil, the world, and our own wicked heart.

These enemies will continually assault you. Every age can have its own specific temptations or trials, every age, every stage in life. Young people may have other temptations than older people, but these enemies will continue to assault. Think, for instance, of Luke 4:13: "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from the Lord Jesus for a season." You see? Only for a time. But he'll be back. He will come again. So, if we look at these three enemies, we consider the devil. Who is he actually, the devil? Well, he was once a high-placed angel, full of goodness. That's how God had created him, but he fell into sin. How is that possible? He fell into sin, Scripture tells us, because of pride. He became very proud, and then he revolted against God. He wanted to be as God. We find this in 1 Timothy 3:6, where Paul tells Timothy not to have one who is new to the faith as an elder because then he can quickly elevate himself, and that he thinks too much of himself, that he falls into pride. That's why Paul says "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." The devil became proud, and he fell into this condemnation.

We also read of other devils, the demons who are also first angels in heaven. Jude 1:6 tells us: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." So, we know also that there was war in heaven, Revelation 12:7-9: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

That's where the devil comes from. This does not answer all our questions. There are certain matters here we still do not understand, and we do not need to understand that. We may know simply that God is good, and God is not the author of evil, and that He hates sin, and to combat sin He was willing to sacrifice His own Son to save sinners. And so, we do not understand still how all this was possible, but we know that God gave the angels a free will, and by virtue of that free will, they could revolt against God. That's what some of them did. Now they hate God, and they make war against God's children.

We read in Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wrath" (angry) "with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed" (That's the church). Then they "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The name Satan means "adversary." He is always against God and His will. The devil seeks to draw people away from God, and then he lies to them and says, "You will have a wonderful time if you rebel against God," but they fall into misery and suffering.

Many think that speaking about demons belongs to heathen people, to pagans who believe in evil spirits, and that this belief no longer belongs to our enlightened age, but that's exactly what the devil loves to see. You see, he is a terrible reality, and he loves it when people do not even believe he exists. But you see it in the Bible clearly revealed, and you can see it all around. Why are so many people hating Christians? Why do they hate the church? They [that is, Christians] only love God and love their neighbor. Why is there so much enmity, so much violence against God's people, and all the deceit and the error that he is pouring out upon the church that will spoil the life of faith, and that he tries to stop the spreading of the Bible, and that he uses all kinds of lusts and temptations to destroy spiritual life? He attacks God's people personally. He tries to cast doubt upon God's Word, and when that doesn't work, then he tries to portray God's service as dull, and dry, and lifeless, or he tries to sow discord between brethren.

So, he whispers to them, "The Lord has forsaken you, and the Lord has forgotten you." Or he comes with all kinds of warped ideas about sin. He can point out the sins you have done, and highlight them. He's trying to lead you to despair, or on the other hand, he emphasizes only God's grace, and he pushes you into presumption, while there's no real sorrow for sin and no repentance. And so, the devil wants to keep you away from God. He wants to cut off the communion with God.

Is God's Word true? Just like he said to Eve. Has God spoken? That's how he already operates, and he is the murderer from the beginning. That's why we must pray, "deliver us from the devil, from evil." But he's only one enemy. There's also the other enemy: the world, the second enemy. The world is not the created world, but the world in its sin and rebellion and hatred against God, the world with all its pride of life, and with the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. That all goes against God, just like 1 John 2:15-16 tells us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And so, Paul writes in Romans 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world," this world that's the rebellion against God.

You know, if we live for this world, for materialism, we are worldly. If we live for wealth, we are worldly. If we have no care or love for our fellow church members and we look down upon them, then we have a worldly mentality, although we are in church. The world is a great danger, and we need the love of Christ in our heart, that He would change us after His image. We need to be delivered from the temptations of the world.

But then there's still the other enemy, the third enemy, our own flesh, our own self that so easily resists God, that's an enemy we harbor in our own hearts, the enemy within our own gates. This enemy often seeks to align itself with the world and with the devil. That's displayed by our sinful desires, by covetousness, by harshness of heart, by our pride. This is the working of the old man within a Christian, that opposes God. That old man is so close to us that before we know it, we are stumbling and falling. We need to see these three enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. We can even be blind to them. We must realize they are there, and then pray that God would deliver us from all this evil.

How can we resist these enemies? It's a battle. It's a spiritual battle, and therefore, we need spiritual weapons. You can't fight against these enemies with violence or with carnal weapons. You need spiritual weapons that the Holy Spirit teaches. So, the Holy Spirit teaches people to resist the devil, to deny themselves, and to flee from temptations. The strength therein is received by prayer and by the study of God's Word. When we pray to be

delivered out of temptation, we're actually praying, "Father, deliver me from places where I may be tempted to sin against Thee and grieve Thy Spirit." It's a prayer that God would not withdraw His restraining care from us. It's a prayer that God would open your eyes to recognize the deceit and filth of this world, and it's by prayer that you receive strength.

Think of what Paul says 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." The Lord gives strength to resist evil. He sheds light upon our paths, that we recognize the tricks of the devil. You know, without the Lord we cannot stand one moment. Peter falls when a maid asks him something. David fell for a woman. Demas fell because of love for the world. Oh, how we need God's grace, the power of God's Spirit to fight against these enemies. We need to be a Christian warrior, a soldier, that we may stand in the evil day. That's what Paul says in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." That's the issue. The Lord clothes His people with spiritual armor. He gives them the helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, and the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:13-17). He makes them very willing. He shows them the power of God's Word that they can use as a sword in this battle. And when they stumble, then still the Lord is willing to forgive them, and that they, eventually, by resisting the devil, will see that he will flee from you (James 4:7). It's a battle that takes place throughout our life.

But flee to the Lord with all your weakness, also with your failings. The Lord will sustain you, and He will lead you on. He knows what it is to be tempted. The disciples tempted Him. The multitude tempted Him. The Pharisees even tempted Him. And He overcame all these temptations. Now you are invited to come to this Savior, Who Himself resisted every temptation. He is willing to be your God, your Savior, and therefore we pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Lecture 9

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY

Welcome to this lecture number nine in the series of the Beauty of Prayer. Today, we're going to look at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." It's actually not a petition. It's not a request. It is a confession. It's the conclusion. We read it in Matthew 6:13, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever."

That's how the Lord Jesus teaches us to conclude our prayers. It's a conclusion of adoration, of glorification. God must be exalted. He must receive all the glory, the praise and the adoration. That's the aim of our life. That's the aim of our existence. That should also be the aim of our prayer, how our prayer must end, in the glory of God.

So, the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples to bow in the dust before the majesty, the power, and the glory of God. It's nothing of us. It's all in Him. We don't receive the glory. He receives the glory, and that's the desire of all those who have learned to love God. They wish to see Him glorified in their lives. This is the great conclusion, the grand perspective of prayer. By doing so, the Lord Jesus gives His people as it were, wings, to fly up to God and behold the greatness of God, and to see the certainty of His power, might and majesty. What a comfort, what a glorious rich perspective [that] they may now end in God.

They have prayed for forgiveness of all their debts. They have laid their needs of daily life before the Lord. They have begged the Lord to be delivered from all evil, and now at the end of this, they may look away from themselves, and from their own needs, and they may look at Who God is. They may stare at the glory and the beauty of God, and that must be the culmination, the conclusion of their prayer. They may admire His greatness. They may wonder at His power. They may marvel in His glorious kingdom and His honor.

At the beginning of this prayer, we were taught to begin our prayer by addressing God Who is in heaven: "Our Father which art in heaven." And that is the glorious reality of God. He is in heaven. He is enthroned in power, in majesty. And now, at the end of this prayer, the Lord Jesus comes back full circle, and He ends in Who God is. Again, we may see the glorious God Who is in heaven. You may begin your prayer, and you may end your prayer, in the power and the glory and the majesty, and so you may know that His kingdom shall come. There's no doubt here.

For it's simply stated, "Thine is the kingdom, and thine is the power," the power to convert sinners, to teach sinners to do Thy will, to cause Thy kingdom to come, and that His glorious name will be hallowed, will receive glory. Oh, this last part of the Lord's Prayer is so glorious. It gives the assurance that all this, what we've prayed for, will come to pass. It's a fact. It's not a question. It's not under discussion. It's simply a fact: "Thine is the kingdom."

You see, God is King forever. Now, God has given the rule of His kingdom to His Son. Now the Lord Jesus is King forever, and His kingdom will be the only kingdom. All other kingdoms, all other empires will fall, but He will rule over everything, and that until all eternity. To Him must all people bow. The Lord is in full control. We may rest in Him. We may rest in His faithfulness, in His power, in His glory. We may say, "Lord, Thou art my Rock, my Hiding Place. I am resting upon the all-powerful God Who shall glorify His name, Who will let His kingdom come, and Who will lead my life in such a way that all matters will work together for my good and to His glory."

Because God's kingdom shall come, and every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue shall confess Him to be Lord of lords, many in that day will do it because they are forced to submit. Before they will be condemned to depart from God forever, they will first have to admit that He is God forever. This is the glorious reality, what the Lord Jesus is teaching us, that this prayer that He teaches us ends with a perspective upon the glorious kingdom of God.

God's kingdom will ultimately consist of a new heaven and a new earth, where heaven and earth will be united together. That will be a kingdom that will last forever. It will be a kingdom without corruption, without fear, without any enemy. A kingdom of perfect peace, a kingdom which will never be destroyed or conquered. This kingdom of God shall break in pieces all other kingdoms, and God's kingdom shall stand forever. Even if His people on earth are killed, they will still reign with Him in glory, and even if they lead a longer life, they will still reign with Him in glory. That's the ultimate end and aim for all those who love the Lord.

This kingdom is the kingdom of Christ. This King has also power, for it's not only so that "Thine is the kingdom," but "Thine is also the power." Actually, every power in existence ultimately originates from God. Even the power of the devil, and the power that people have to commit all kinds of evil, they receive that power ultimately from God, but they are abusing their power, and they will be punished for that.

But in order for a man to do wicked deeds, he needs power from God. Now, Christ has displayed the power of God by crushing Satan's head. That took place on the cross when He overcame the prince of darkness. Now, He is exhibiting His power by delivering people who are held in bondage and slavery by the devil. He is redeeming them, so He is delivering captives, and He is causing His kingdom to come. Power is an essential perfection of God.

God not only has the power to make laws, but also to enforce compliance to His laws. He issues commands, but He can also enforce obedience. He does that by His power. Sinful people never wanted to listen to God. They are overcome by the power of Christ, and that power is now drawing people who will be kicking and resisting God, but He overcomes their unwillingness. He makes them very willing in the day of His power, Psalm 110.

He draws them with bonds of love. He'll receive the power of God in converting sinners. The chains of Satan are broken. God's kingdom is set up within the souls of people. His power keeps His people and preserves them from falling and brings them into this heavenly kingdom. So when we pray to God, we must realize He has every power, and the power of God is available to you.

Everlasting power is there for you. This power of God is on your side, when you have been gained for His kingdom. He can defend you from every enemy. He can save you out of every difficulty. He can even cause His angels to come and to deliver you. He can subdue any sin within you. There's nothing too difficult for Him. He can save to the uttermost because He is the Almighty, all-powerful, everlasting God. He is willing to save. He is powerful and willing: powerful to save, willing to save. That's how He reveals Himself: as a loving and a merciful God.

He is able and willing to provide you with all your cares, and so when you pray, think about His almighty power. It's through His almighty power that He saves lost sinners. He has already shown this power in such beautiful manners. How is it possible that God can become man? That's possible through His Son. God sent His Son into this world, and He caused His Son to be born from a virgin, and to be born and grow and live among us. He laid down His life as a ransom price for sin, and by His almighty power, He overcame death. He arose from the dead.

By this same almighty power, He conquered hell. He vanquished the power of the evil one. He removes the guilt of His people, and then in that same almighty power, He sends His Spirit to apply that work of Christ to souls of men. He changes people's lives. He makes them new, and that's only possible because of His almighty power. Nothing can change a sinner's heart. Only God's power can do that.

You know, that the same power that created heaven and earth, the same power that causes a dead man to rise from the grave, that same power is needed to convert a sinner. So, it's through that same almighty power that God's Spirit saves people from their sins. He translates them from darkness to His wonderful light. That's His almighty power. The Lord has shown His salvation.

Now when you pray, think about His power. Think about His almighty power, by which He is willing to save lost sinners. Have trust in His almighty power. He can deliver sinners from bondage. The greatest sinners can be converted. Trust in His power. He has already shown so much of His power in this world. Maybe you know about His power in your own life. When you know of His great power that He saved you, and how He overcame difficulties in your life, maybe you are again looking at impossibilities, and you're laying these impossibilities down before the Lord and you don't know how this can be solved in your life. You don't know how you can go on any further, but remember, He can save to the uttermost because He is almighty.

Remember the deeds He has done as recorded in Scripture. Remember the deeds He has already done in your life. Take courage. Plead upon His almighty power. That may give you hope and comfort, even when you may feel that you are still outside of God's saving grace. That's possible that you see that you need His work of salvation in your own life, and you have come to realize that you cannot save yourself, and you cannot renew yourself, but what you cannot do, He can do. He is Almighty God. Therefore, rest your case with Him. Have hope upon His almighty power.

Realize that the Lord Jesus is able and willing to perform this work of salvation in your life: 'What I cannot do, Thou art able to perform, because Thou art almighty.' A child of God has no power in himself, but then you may come as a timid, weak dove. You may shelter underneath the wings of Jesus' power. What a stark contrast: His great power, our utter weakness. In spiritual life, we become acquainted with God's power as well as with our own weakness. We are taught to forsake ourselves and to trust upon Him.

You see, the more you see your own weakness, the more you will trust upon God alone. You will venture upon His power. When a skipper sees that his boat is fragile and leaking, he will seek a carpenter to fix it. When you realize that you are weak, you will flee to God to receive power to help you in time of need. Too often, a Christian, a child of God, will trust still in his own power and think he can handle this, and he will neglect to seek power and grace of God. You see that in the life of David and of Peter and of others.

Never trust your own power, but cast yourself upon God's power. You see, this is glorifying to God, "for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory." When we see God's glorious kingdom and we observe His power, then this all will lead to the glorification of God because God must receive everlasting glory, and there are so many reasons for that. Is it not a glorious thing to see a candle still burning in the midst of terrible winds, or to see that same candle in the midst of quenching waves, but it still burns?

It's not blown out, and likewise to see a weak human being assaulted on every side, but sustained and held firm in God's arms until finally every enemy will be vanquished, is a glorious matter. Our weakness drives us out to God, and because of His power, a poor, bruised reed is not broken, and the faint smoking flax is not quenched (Isaiah 42:3). What a blessing, to lean upon the Lord, that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13). And in this way, God is glorified.

You see that salvation in the entirety of your life. That's not because of you. It's all because of His care for you, because of His grace, because of His power. Glory must therefore be ascribed only to the Lord. That's again, as we said before, the aim of all God's dealings. It's the glory of God Himself. He made all things to His own glory. That means all things were created by Him, and for Him, and they must all contribute to His supreme and endless praise. That's why the Lord Jesus always promoted the glory of God. He desired that God would be glorified in His life here on earth, and that must be the aim of all His people.

He said, "Father, I've glorified Thee upon the earth" because God works all things to the glory and the honor of His name. He saves sinners to the glory of His name. He shows mercy upon a sinner so that His name would be honored and adored, and that's ultimately what prayer is all about: the glory and the honor of God because the Lord works all things to His glory. He created heaven and earth to His glory: Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God." And the Lord works salvation to the glory of His name: Ephesians 1:5-6, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will and to the praise of the glory of His grace."

Think of that beautiful text in Psalm 50:15, “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” God saves, delivers, so that you would say God is good. To Him be the praise and the adoration. So, the Lord sustains His people and strengthens His servants and helps His servants as they deliver His Word. He does it all to the glory of His name. So, He saves and delivers His people from all their troubles, to the glory of His name.

So when you pray, let this be in the background of your prayer, that ultimately everything must have this aim: that God would be glorified. Let it be also your personal prayer, “Lord glorify Thy name in my life.” Then ultimately it does not matter what happens to you that much, as long as God would be glorified.

Then even in days of sickness, or in days of hardships, pray that what you go through may be to the glory of His great name. Ask grace of God to be kept from sin. Ask grace that you would be made obedient to God, and that it all would be to the glory of God, for He is worthy of all glory, praise and adoration.

You know God is glorified by thanksgiving. God is glorified when we acknowledge that God answers prayer. We are to offer thanksgiving to God for His many blessings, and this is glorifying God. That’s why a Christian should not only pray and lay petitions before God but also remember to give thanksgiving to God.

Every day the Lord gives us so many tokens of His mercy and grace, and these supply us with many reasons to offer thanksgiving to Him, and this will all be to the glory of His name. Think of how the Lord supplies you with your daily food. Think of how He causes the sun to shine, that He lets the rain come down. Think of how He gave you His Word, and how His Word spoke to your heart. Think of the invitations to everlasting life, and how He shows you His forgiving grace.

Even when you go through difficulties, when a child of God looks back, Who kept your head upward? Who sustained you? Who lifted you up? Who gave you grace? It was the Lord Who did this. It’s often in the path of difficulties that the Lord teaches His people rich spiritual lessons, and then in a certain sense, even the afflictions can be blessings in disguise because they show you more of Who God is, and thereby God glorifies Himself.

So, we are called to give thanksgiving to God. This is glorifying to Him, but still this is often neglected. People receive blessings. They are happy. They are glad, but that’s not the same as being thankful. That’s not the same as giving glory to God. For instance, you find that in the 10 lepers who came to the Lord Jesus; the Lord healed them all, Luke 17:17, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found, that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger,” and he was a Samaritan.

The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” So, the Bible shows us the necessity of thanksgiving. Why is that? Because God thereby receives glory. We acknowledge His goodness towards us. We cannot in ourselves add anything to His glory, but now He is pleased to receive our simple praises, and He is pleased to accept our thanksgiving and to consider that thereby He would be glorified.

True thanksgiving comes from a heart that is humbly aware of its own unworthiness. To give true thanksgiving, you must realize that we didn’t deserve anything of what we received. Such a heart shall value the gifts and shall appreciate the love of the Giver of all these gifts, and say with Jacob, ‘I am not worthy of the least of all these blessings’ (Genesis 32:10).

So to give glory to God, it’s important to be particular, to mention blessings God has given us. There can be many daily blessings in which God shows care for our daily lives. We can have been in certain difficulties, and the Lord gives full deliverance. Don’t forget those deliverances, but lay them before the Lord with thanksgiving. The Lord has given us many privileges above many other people. Let us acknowledge God for that. He cares for nature. He sustains heaven and earth. We see the sun and the moon and the stars, and we must adore God for all the works of His hands.

The Lord also gives the various seasons and grants the grass to grow upon the mountains. The Lord gives food to the animals. How He cares for the crops, we read in Psalm 65:9–11: “Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: Thou settlest the furrows thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers: Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness.” So, God is glorified because of all His care for nature.

When we give our thanksgiving to the Lord, we must do that remembering that He made us, that He made us to be reasonable creatures, and that we are capable of knowing God and of loving Him and enjoying Him. That

capacity is already an abundant reason to give thanks to God and to praise God. We must praise Him that we are not as the animals who will perish, that we have received such privilege to know, love and enjoy God.

So, offer up thanksgiving to the Lord, that He keeps and protects us, that He gives us intelligence and understanding, that He gives us bodies that function as they should, that the Lord has cared for us since the day we were born. Isaiah says that, "The Lord has carried us all the days. The Lord has watched over us." He has taken care of us in all our ways, and that in spite of our sins and our many shortcomings. We have not given Him honor which He deserved to receive. Let us give thanks to God for all His care, for health and when He has restored health after sickness. There is only really a step between us and death, but the Lord has kept us all our life.

We may still be in the land of the living. The Lord has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears and our feet from falling (Psalm 116:8). Therefore, we are to give proper thanks to the Lord for all these blessings. He is like a shepherd who cares for his sheep and who gives us every day food and nourishment. It can be that the Lord has blessed us in our daily work and our occupation. Maybe He has given us strength and insight in our profession and ability, so that the works of our hands have been blessed. The Lord gives us homes to live in, and the Lord keeps us from danger.

He may have blessed us in giving us children, and so if you think further and more about the blessings the Lord gives us, you will soon realize we cannot even number them all. They become so plenteous, then actually we see in front of us a huge pile. Actually, it's a huge mountain of all the tokens of God's goodness given to us.

If we then realize who we are in ourselves, then we see another mountain; that's the mountain of our sins, of our shortcomings, and so often we neglected to do what we should have done. We did not do the will of God; we have fallen short. Then it's such a miracle that in spite of this great mountain of our own sins and iniquities, we still see that mountain of God's blessings and goodness towards us. In between these two mountains, we see the valley of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

All these blessings are merited by Christ, in spite of all our sins. Therefore, to God be all the glory, the praise and the adoration. You know it's a most comforting thought, a thought that we cannot fully fathom, but that it will be so glorious in heaven, for there God will receive all glory, without any spot or stain of sin, and that will take place till all eternity. That is such a blessed thought: that the history of this world will end therein, that God will receive glory for all His works. That will be the joy of all those who love Him: that they will spend eternity magnifying and glorifying God for all the riches of His grace.

Therefore, the thanksgiving and the adoration that you now lift up in this life will one day be made perfect: perfect adoration, true unstained, unspotted worship. Then, the whole Church of God will break out in adoration, "for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever." Thank you.

Lecture 10

AMEN

Welcome to this lecture number 10 in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. Now, we wish to consider the last word of this prayer the Lord Jesus teaches us. It's the word "Amen." After the Lord Jesus has taught us to plead upon God's kingdom, upon God's power and glory and that He was to receive this forever and ever, after we have come to the end of our prayers and laid all our petitions before the Lord and have sought the Lord and have poured out our heart before Him, then we conclude the prayer by saying "amen." That's actually a very glorious and most comforting end to this prayer, the word "amen."

Some people think that "amen" simply means it's the end, the end of our prayer. Now we can open our eyes again, for now prayer is done. That's not the meaning of the word "amen." Amen is actually a beautiful word. It comes from the Hebrew. It's actually a Hebrew word that means "this shall be truly sure and certain." In the setting of prayer, it means that after we have laid our needs before God, we may be certain that God shall hear our prayers.

The Lord promises in His Word that He hears prayer. He is a God Who delights to hear the humble prayers of His people, and He will do so. When we pray in agreement to His will and to His Word, the Lord tells us several times that He will hear our prayers. That word "amen" is a very strong conclusion to our prayers, "it will surely be so."

The Lord Jesus teaches us then in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Do you also notice here that the Lord Jesus repeats the same truth six times, so that we would be convinced that God hears prayer.

We find beautiful examples of that in Scripture. For instance, Peter, he was kept in prison. Acts 12:5 tells us, "But prayer was made without ceasing by the church unto God for him." So, they prayed for the release of Peter, and the Lord heard their prayers and set Peter at liberty. The angel of the Lord came in the temple in the prison and delivered Peter and brought him outside. Then Peter walked to the house where the early church was gathered, and he knocked at the front door. But then you see they didn't even believe he was there. He kept on knocking, and then finally they realized it was really Peter.

You see that the Lord answering prayer is not dependent on if we'll expect it or if we believe it. The answering of God to our prayers is not dependent on our feelings or upon our expectation. It depends on the faithfulness of God. The hearing of prayer depends on the power and the grace of God; and therefore, we are to pray, to pray

without ceasing. You will not pray in vain. Lay all your petitions before the Lord, even if the Lord hears you differently than you expect or even hope.

To use again that example of the Apostle Peter, we know from early church history that later on he went to Rome. There at Rome, eventually, he was put in prison and put to death. We may imagine that the church of those days had also prayed [to] the Lord [asking] if God would deliver Peter out of prison again, but God answered differently. God took Peter out of this life and led him to glory. God still took care of Peter but differently than people had maybe been praying for.

So at times, God can answer our prayers differently than we imagine. You will know that well-known example of the Apostle Paul who prayed earnestly three times that he would be delivered from a thorn in his flesh, a certain pain he had, a certain great urgent need. He must have thought, "If this thorn of the flesh would no longer be there, I could do even more for the Lord." The Lord did not grant him his request; the thorn remained. The Lord told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you." You see the Lord answered and heard but differently than Paul had expected or hoped for.

Because, you see, the Lord does that which is good, and He leads all His people to be strengthened or to be taken where He is in glory. He hears prayer. He does what is good for His people. He knows what they are praying for, and He will answer them. What a sure and a rich reality. What a rich blessing. That's why we may pray with expectation. We should take our prayers seriously. God takes our prayers more seriously than we do. So, we may conclude our prayer with that little word "amen," implying that God hears prayer.

That little word "amen" is a confession at the end of our prayer that we believe God will answer our prayers. At the same time, that little word "amen" is also a call to faith. As we express and pronounce that word "amen," it's a call to us to have trust and confidence in the Lord that He will hear. He will lead us, and we will have to fear no evil for He will undertake for us. That little word "amen" is a call to trust in God.

Now how is it with us? Do we pray in faith? Do we exercise true faith? This word "amen" is a call that we examine ourselves if we lean upon the Lord by trust and confidence. It pleases the Lord to deal with His people in the way of His promises, and those promises are a call to faith, to believe, to trust in the Lord.

So the Lord deals with us in the way of faith. Faith is important. There is much faith that is not true faith. That's not biblical saving faith. There is also false faith. There are people who call themselves Christians, who give the impression that they also trust in the Lord, but they are false believers.

In which way can we recognize false faith? False faith is closely related to idolatry. Idolatry is a reality whereby we exchange the true God for an idol. Now that can be literally an idol. It can be an image. It used to happen a lot. It still happens in certain religions that they worship idols. Paul speaks about that in Romans 1:25, about the wicked "who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

Also, in our lives, we can have idols. Although we may not bow down in front of images, still we can have idols. We can believe in certain matters, trust in certain matters, and we expect them to give us happiness and joy. Some people trust in sexuality. Some people trust in money. Some people are their own idol. They elevate themselves. They are impressed about themselves. They think that they are so very important, and then you make yourself an idol. The Apostle Paul even says that some people made their belly an idol because they only think about eating and drinking and enjoying things, but that's all sinful.

It can also be that people invent their own view of God and that they remove all biblical attributes of God that they don't like. So they come up with a god of their own liking. There are quite a few people now who think that God is just loving, and He is condoning iniquity, and He only does nice things, and He is only there to bless us and after this life to take us into heaven. But that's a warped view of God: a God Who is only love, and Who never punishes sin, Who never bothers people. That's a wrong view of God. Now this kind of idolatry occurs frequently, and it's hard to detect because people also speak about God and about Christ, but it's not true faith. It's counterfeit faith. It's idolatry. They don't have the biblical view of God, but they have this self-made view of Who God is.

So false faith is closely related to idolatry. A false faith is also delusional. It deceives us. It undermines our ability to think correctly about God. Our understanding will be darkened. Romans 1:21-22, "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." So Paul writes in Second Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which

believe not.” These are people who followed the god of this world, an idol or a man-centered view of life, but the result is that they are blinded. They follow deceit, and so their rational abilities are compromised. We can no longer discern truth from error. We become blinded, and everyone believes in something, but many people believe a lie, and that lie blinds them. It hardens them because false faith is delusional.

False faith is also a deliberate commitment to evil. Man desires that which is evil; that is displayed, and the fact that men shy away from God’s Truth, for instance, John 3:19, “light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” People don’t want God. They hide away from Him. They don’t seek Him at all. They have no delight in God’s Word.

It’s even addictive once you’re on that pattern. This pattern increases, becomes worse with a person. It becomes a deliberate commitment to evil. Then, they don’t even want to listen to God anymore. It’s rebellion. So, there are only two alternatives: genuine faith or defiant disobedience. So, this is the reality of false faith, and it’s a characteristic of the natural man that people exchange the truth about God for a lie. It’s captivating. It ruins our relationship to God. It destroys our soul, and it also ruins relationships with other people.

To be delivered from false faith and to learn to trust truly in God, we need God to save us. We need the Lord to enlighten our heart and mind. When His Spirit works in our hearts and we see how true God is and how faithful He is, that His Word is true, then you learn to truly trust in the Lord and then you truly learn to say “amen” to God, and you say “amen” to all His commandments and to the totality of His Word. So, you thirst for His presence in your heart and life, and that’s something we need to learn: to live by this true faith that says “amen” to God, that we trust in the living God.

So we must learn to exercise true faith, and that can be quite difficult. Maybe you find it difficult to always trust in God and have confidence in God. I hope you do not embrace an idol. I hope you do love the truth of God’s Word, that you do not want to exercise some commitment to evil, and that you may know in your heart how the Lord has become too strong for you and that the Lord has given you the fear of His name in your heart. I hope that this is what you long for, what you live for. And it can then still be that you find it difficult to always trust in God and that you find it hard to always trust His promises by faith.

You see, you look at yourself. You see your shortcomings. You see your failures, and you also know that God is a Holy God. Over against your shortcomings, you see that God is a consuming fire. You can easily fear, even after you have received grace, saving grace; and then you can wonder, ‘Would there still be grace for a sinner like me?’ Maybe you’re shaken to and fro. Maybe you’re in turmoil. Look then to Jesus. Look unto Him. See how He deals with His disciples, who were so often going astray and were impatient and also full of unbelief.

See how the Lord Jesus deals with sinners in the gospels. They come to Him, and He sends none away. He says in Luke 19:10, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” He declares [to] you in John 3:17, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” He longs for salvation. He had compassion upon the multitude because He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. He wept over impenitent Jerusalem that killed the prophets. He longed to gather them as a hen gathers her young ones. Look at the sufferings of Christ. He went through a life of hardships and misery, and He entered the most miserable death. In this all, we see in Jesus His [love for sinners]. His [love for sinners] is so great that He gave Himself. Don’t think He will turn you down in anger when you flee to Him with all your failures, with your sins, with your shortcomings, with your unworthiness, with your struggles against unbelief and with all the weakness of your faith.

Come to Him. The Lord is gracious, and He receives such people. He is full of loving kindness. He offers Himself freely to you with all His ability to save and to bless you. He even says in the last verses of Scripture, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). See how the Lord invites you kindly in this prayer to expect all grace and all salvation from the Lord alone. He calls you. He sets out before you all your needs, the vital matters in your life, what you need to pray for. You may come to Him, begging for His mercy. You may confess your unworthiness, pleading His righteousness, and you may be encouraged and comforted that the Lord is willing to hear your prayers far above your own expectation. That is what you see set before you in this little word “amen.” What a blessed comfort, what a glorious hope to look unto Him. You may say in the struggles of the father of that sick child in Mark 9:24, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

So, “amen” is a call to trust the Lord. It’s a call to adore God. It’s a call to thank Him for all His blessings and faithfulness; and only when we pray in agreement to His will can we truly say “amen” after our prayer. He tells us to say “amen” after we have prayed in a biblical manner, and that is prayer focused upon God’s honor, focused upon the extension of His kingdom; and thereby we plead God’s power, and we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. That is prayer in agreement to God’s Word and to that prayer, the Lord tells His people to say “amen.”

So, “amen” is a call to trust in God. All who have been taught to pray by God’s Spirit should persevere in such prayer, for God shall answer. Be encouraged. God is faithful in the Lord Jesus. Persevere in faith for the extension of God’s kingdom. Continue in faith seeking God’s honor. Continue to pray for those around you and for your church, for its members. Continue to pray worldwide for the church that’s being persecuted. Pray that His glorious name may be exalted. Continue with this prayer because the days are evil. There is much confusion and deceit. There are many needs, but lay them all before the Lord and conclude your prayer with “amen,” trusting that He will hear you because “amen” is a call to trust.

“Amen” is also a call to be truly thankful, that you realize all the benefits God has given you in the Lord Jesus Christ and be thankful. Because of this thankfulness, you may say “amen” to your prayers, knowing that God is faithful to His cause. Consider the miracles wherefore you may be thankful: that the eternal God became flesh and dwelt among us, that He entered our lives that we may have eternal life. Think of all the expositions of the Lord Jesus revealed to us in the gospel, that we may meditate upon all this and the glorious fact that He conquered death, that He overcame corruption and earned life everlasting, that He promises to make all things new. What love does God show us in the glorious victory of Christ, that He purchased all these benefits.

What a blessing to know this salvation and that the Lord has provided us with teachers, with ministers, and above all, with His own Holy Word. When we know the grace of God in our own life, realize the great privilege that Ezekiel 16 tells us. Those words have then be fulfilled in our lives. There the prophet uses the illustration of a newly born infant who is unwanted, cast away in the desert ready to die. That’s how God saw you and me, “You were cast out into open field to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born. And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live;’ yea, I said unto you in your blood, ‘Live’” (Ezekiel 16:5–6). God gave His Son to die in your place.

What a miracle. He has known you from before the foundation of the Earth. His Spirit has entered your heart. He has opened your eyes for the grace of Christ Jesus. He has given you a new purpose in your life. He delivered you from the slavery of the devil. You may know His love, the love of Christ in your heart. He did not give you up to your own wicked passions. He daily leads you. He gives you a clear conscience through faith in Christ. He is daily strengthening you in all your labors. He has given you to experience with communion with God. “You may be satisfied with the fatness of God’s house and be made to drink of the river of his pleasures,” Psalm 36:8. For all these reasons, give thanks to God, and you may add “amen” to that, knowing that it is certainly sure and true. He has always provided for you. Show true thankfulness.

How many answers to prayer has the Lord given you? How often have you cried out of the depths, and He heard you? Thank God that He is faithful. Even in times of affliction, has He not encouraged you? Second Corinthians 4:17, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” What a continual care of Christ that He is now at work preparing a place for you in the house of His Father and that He’d made sure that you will not be plucked out of His hand, that He will give you the victory. They will overcome by the blood of the Lamb. How we should give thanks to the Lord for all His goodness. That we should thank the Lord for His Word.

So, all these blessings flow forth from that word “amen.” They are confirmed by the word “amen.” It’s thinking of all the blessings, and you say “amen” to them. The word “amen” is a call to trust. It’s a call to be thankful, to realize what God has done. This word “amen” is a call to adoration, to glorify God, to remember His loving kindness that although we are small and unworthy, that we may adore Him for all His goodness and His loving kindness. You see, then you become so small.

What Peter had in Luke 5:8, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” He means to say ‘Thou and I, we do not fit together. I’m so unworthy.’ Like the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:8, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof,” so we become small. So we must adore God, and then everything in your

life must revolve around the glory of God's name. Then your life is not about your ease and pleasure, but it's about His honor. I am not important, Lord. Thy name is important. Thou art important.

How we need the help of the Holy Spirit to say this in self-denial that we would truly adore Him. He is worthy. It's not about me. It's about Thee, O Lord. You see the honor of God and man's salvation, they always come together because God saves to the glory of His name. So, when we say "amen" at the end of our prayers, it's a call of adoration of this good-doing glorious God. Then once the final "amen" shall sound, that will be in heaven, where all the redeemed will say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." We read in Revelation 5:12-14 that all were united in glorifying God, and they worshiped Him that liveth forever and ever, amen.

Lecture 11

PRACTICAL ISSUES REGARDING PRAYER

Welcome to lecture number 11, in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. In the previous lectures, we have considered the various aspects of the Lord's Prayer. And now in these final lectures, we hope to consider some aspects of prayer, some practical issues regarding prayer. And that's what we wish to start off with in this lecture.

So, prayer is very sensitive. Prayer is difficult. Prayer that costs effort. It takes self-denial. It takes time, but prayer makes Christian life so beautiful, for then you are in contact with God Himself, and that brings us then to the question, to Whom must we pray? Well, we understand that; the Lord Jesus taught us, "Our Father, which art in heaven," and we read in Scriptures so often that people call upon the Lord, upon God. Yes, we are to pray only to God because He made us. We are dependent upon Him. Many people do not want to pray to God. They want to be independent of God, then they want to use their body, their mind, their talents, the gifts that God gives them, they want to use that for themselves. And they don't pray to God. This is all rebellion against Him.

Then man wants to be independent of God, but the reality is we are fully dependent upon God. God is the Maker of us, our bodies. He has created our soul, has given us our mind, intelligence. And so therefore, we must also give account of what we have done with our bodies, with our minds and how we have cared for our soul. We must give an account of what we've done with our money, with our time; and that account must be given to God.

Do you know what it means to have unconditional surrender to God? That everything in your life maybe laid down before him. I hope you may know this, this surrender to God. That's what prayer actually is: surrender to God. That's why we fold our hands, confessing we cannot help ourselves. Our hands cannot help us. We close our eyes. We don't want to have any disturbing factors. We need God to help us. We pray to God.

We also know that God is the Triune God. God the Father is the source of all things. He is the Maker of heaven and Earth. He has devised the plan of salvation. He is the Judge of heaven and Earth. We are accountable to Him, and we know that God the Son is the Mediator, the Mediator of God the Father so that God the Son was the Mediator in creation. Everything was made through Him. And He is also the Mediator of salvation. And He is also the One to Whom God the Father has given the power to judge heaven and Earth, to judge all creatures, to judge what is given to Him, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. And the Holy Spirit is the power of God.

So, creation took place through the power of the Holy Spirit. He gives life. And salvation is received through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who applies God's Word to our heart. And so, people are convicted on the Day of Judgment that they will forever perish by the accusing power of God's Spirit. You see, God the Father is the Source, and God the Son is the Mediator, and God the Spirit is the Power through Whom the Triune God works.

And these three divine persons are equal. They are all God. So, the Bible tell us, one God, Three Persons. Every person is fully God, and yet there's only one God, not three Gods.

God is so highly elevated [that] we cannot understand Him. Also, the Trinity is something beyond us. In eternity, the Triune God loved One Another, the Three Divine Persons. And then, when we are referring to prayer, people wonder, "Can we pray to God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit? Who are we actually praying to, when we pray to the Triune God?" Well, you are praying to, as you say, the Triune God; you're praying to the Lord. But we may also address our prayers to the Father. You may also pray to the Son. We find it so often in the Scripture, in the New Testament. You may also pray to God the Holy Spirit because He is also God, but we must realize that God, the Holy Spirit sheds light upon the Son, the Lord Jesus. And that the Lord Jesus is a Mediator to reconcile sinners to God the Father. Ultimately, it is that God the Father, our Maker against Whom we rebelled, that we would be reconciled to Him, God the Father. So that God would be All in All.

The Son opened a fresh, new and living way to the Father. And the Spirit takes it out of Christ. What does it take? Salvation. Merited salvation. And He applies it to us. And then a sinner becomes convicted of his sin. He becomes the desirous for the Lord. And so, we see the various works within the Trinity. And so, we may pray to these three Divine Persons, but keep in mind the various positions of the Three Divine Persons.

You don't find so often in Scripture that people pray to God the Holy Spirit. We do, but that's because the Spirit sheds light upon Christ. He works in the background. He does not shed light upon Himself. He points away from Himself to the Lord Jesus. He delights in the fact that sinners are united to Christ and so reconciled to God.

Another practical issue regarding prayer is the format of prayer. How should we pray? We are to be organized in our prayers. There are various aspects of prayer that we should distinguish. Scripture teaches us that we must adore God. He must receive praise and adoration. He is God. We must also get thanksgiving to God, that we're giving Him humble thanks for the tokens of His grace and the many benefits He affords us. Important in prayer is that we would also confess our sins; and that we would also lay our supplications, our needs before the Lord; and that we would also intercede, that is pray, for others in their needs.

These are actually the various aspects of prayer, the format of prayer. So, we can say that prayer includes the following: adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication and intercession. Then some people wonder, "What use is it if we pray? If God has already ordained everything that is going to happen because He is the Sovereign Lord? He has already ordained everything. He has decreed who would be saved. He governs all events. Why then should we pray?" Because the Lord wants us to pray. And we must realize He grants the petitions of His children. He incorporates the prayers of His people in His sovereign plan. He carries out His council according to their prayers. That's why He delights in the prayers of His people, and He hears them most graciously. And that's why the Apostle Paul wants people to pray for him and [why] he also prayed much for other people. Although he knew very well that God has an eternal council and that He will carry that out, Paul [also] knew that God makes use of the prayers of His people.

So, prayer is very useful and necessary. With whom should we pray? Should you do that alone or with others? Well, in the first place we should do that [is] when we are alone, personal prayer. But it's very important to pray together with others. If you are married, that you would pray together with your spouse. If you have a family, that you would pray together with your family. And as churches, as we gather, then we are also called to unite in prayer because the Lord hears prayer. And so, it's very good to come together as a group of believers to pray in church.

We read, for instance in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." So, you have here the example: if people come together confessing their sins, that the Lord will hear their petitions. So, praying with others is important, but most important is personal prayer, when we are alone before God. Because the Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." We are to pray in the closet. It's an inner room. In those days, it was a storage room. The houses in the days of the Lord Jesus would often only have one room, but there would be a little storage room. More like a large closet. And that's where you should go into, the Lord Jesus says. And you shut the door behind you, and there you should pray all alone, where nobody sees you except the Lord.

And that life of prayer alone before God is so very blessed. There you'll discover Who God is for a poor lost sinner. There God's Word will uncover you to your sin and iniquity. There depths are laid open within you of which you yourself are not even aware they were present. There, the inner motivation of your deeds becomes clear to you. It's in the inner chamber where the grace of Christ is applied to the heart, where you discover peace with God. There, the Lord Jesus shows His great sinners love to the soul. There, you learn to see the crucified Savior as altogether lovely. There, alone before God, you learn to give up all resistance to Christ and there, you understand what it means that your heart melts under the love of God. There, you taste delights and pleasures in God, which are beyond comparison. It's a fruitful life, that life in the inner chamber. It is there the fruits of faith are grown and nurtured, fruits of gentleness, of long-suffering, of patience, humility, love and care and graciousness and compassion. These are fruits that the Lord gives as a result of prayer alone in your closet.

And the Lord wants us to close the door behind us to be alone with Him. You read in Scripture too, that Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide, Genesis 24:63. And the Lord Jesus went up into a mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23). He did that throughout the night. And we read in Mark 1:35 that, "In the morning, a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." We read in the book of Acts that Peter went up onto the roof of the house to pray (Acts 10:9). You see, when you're alone before God, your prayers will be different. You love your wife. You have no secrets for her, but still when you are together with her, your prayers are different. Because in your personal prayer the Lord opens your heart. And there you receive strength in personal struggles.

But nevertheless, prayer in marriage is also very important. To seek one another as husband and wife in prayer, that you together may lay down your needs before the Lord just like Isaac and Rebekah together entreated the Lord. And just like Zechariah and Elizabeth were a godly couple, what a blessing [it is] to pray together. As a husband and a wife, we need to love one another. It's only when you love one another that you can also pray together.

Likewise, it's also very beneficial to pray together as a family. Family worship, that's very important when we speak of prayer because the first people you will pray with are the members of your family. We find that also in Scripture. Abraham, he conducted worship services together with his family and all his servants. Isaac and Jacob did the same. And David did also the same; he says in Psalm 101:2, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." He sought the Lord together with his family.

And when should we do that? Because life is busy. The members of the family have their obligations and duties. We should try to pray together as a family at meal time. Then, the father of the house can lead in prayer, and we should do that at set times; especially then when we eat together, then we start the meal by asking a blessing upon the Lord, and we should also conclude the meal with Scripture reading and prayer. Also, when there are guests in our home, they should be present and be included in our prayers. And we should not only pray for a blessing upon our food but ask for forgiveness for our sins, thank the Lord for His many blessings given upon this day. And so, commending the various needs of the members of the family before the Lord in prayer, that's a rich blessing to be so together as a family.

It's a very old custom, an old Christian custom that we do it this way. We read of it in the New Testament already. Paul for instance, in the storm on the ship, they hadn't eaten for days and he sits down and he starts to eat bread, but first he gives thanks to the Lord, prayer. In the early church, Christians were slandered and many evil, wicked things, lies, were told about them. For instance, they had terrible feasts and were actually gluttons, but then there was a theologian, Tertullian, and he wrote in truth, "We do not sit down at our table before we have first sought our God in prayer. And we eat together as those who realize that we should still be able to serve our God during the night. We conclude our meals with prayers and thanksgivings, and therefore we do not give ourselves up to a foolish lifestyle. We conduct daily, regular spiritual exercises in our homes." And those spiritual exercises, they will be prayer but also reading of God's Word. Already, in those days, there were many copies of God's Word distributed, handwritten among God's people.

We read it also in the gospels that the Lord Jesus sat down to eat, and He first prayed when He ate with the 5,000 men in Matthew 14. And likewise, we see that at other occasions, prayer was offered. The Lord Jesus asked for a blessing, and He also gave a prayer of thanksgiving. And so we, as a family should conduct ourselves in this manner. Often this also gives us opportunity, not only for Scripture reading but after a meal that we can sing various Psalms or spiritual hymns. And then we can ask a blessing of God upon the daily work we do, remembering

each individual member of our home. Now, what a blessing is such communal prayer in a family, where the whole family life is embedded in this life of prayer.

We see these matters also revealed in Scripture. We already mentioned Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and we know from the five books of Moses that the fathers in Israel were called to instruct their families. And Paul exhorts the men in 1 Timothy 2:8, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." When Paul says "everywhere," he especially means their own homes. That's where they are called to pray.

So, the fathers in the family or the leaders of the family are called to lead in prayer. Actually, every family should be something of a little church, and every home should be a house of prayer. And now, we're speaking not of personal prayer, but of prayer within the setting of a family, praying with our family, with our friends.

We find this also in Acts 12:12, "Where many were gathered together for prayer." Family prayer will be something done within a home. Many reasons can be given to promote this family prayer. Why should we conduct family prayer? Because God has promised to hear prayer. God hears prayer. He is the living God. They who call upon the name of the Lord, they will be heard, Psalm 34:15, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." And in Matthew 18:19, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on Earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father, which is in heaven."

So, we even read of Queen Esther, who came together with her maidens in her living quarters and they called upon God for deliverance (Esther 4:16). We read of Job, who repeatedly sanctified his children through sacrifices and prayer (Job 1:5). When there is open mutual prayer, quarrels and disagreements in the family will die away; and much comfort will be experienced in the way of family prayer when there are days of grief and sorrow.

Many people have wondered whether it is allowed to read a form of prayer, a prayer that someone else has written and that we read in our devotions with our families. We answer that this is certainly allowed. It can be that leaders of a family find it difficult to formulate prayers, and so they may make use of prayers written by other godly men. But we must realize that there can be certain needs within a family that are not verbalized in such a standard prayer. And so, we should still modify such a prayer to include the needs of our family. And also using a form prayer at certain locations can avoid that those who lead in prayer would always be using the same terms, words and phraseology; because those who lead in prayer must be careful that they don't always use the same words, and so a form prayer, or even preparing yourself in advance by reading for yourself a form prayer, that can help you when you are called to engage in public prayer. So, it can be useful to read them for yourself.

Another important matter is the fact that we should teach our children to pray. We do that by being an example to them. But also, instructing them that they themselves should pray, that they should realize that they are sinful people, that they need a new heart, that they need to be born again, and that the Lord Jesus has paid the price for sin. And so, we should teach our children to pray for the work of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts and show our children that we may lay all our needs before Him, teach them that they should not live for this world but for heaven, and show them that the share of grace and riches in Christ [is] far more important than the riches of the world. Show them and warn them how evil sin is and the terrible consequences of sin. Tell them that God is ready to hear them. It's important for children at a young age that they realize these matters. And at first, we should pray together with them. And then later on, lead them that that they would pray on their own, and showing them that they should also pray for others around them. Show them that this is the most important thing in life and that there are no needs too small for the Lord, and there are no needs too great for the Lord, so that a child learns to unburden itself before the Lord.

And so, teach children also to pray for the well-being of the church. Teach them to pray for the persecuted children of God, those who are imprisoned and who suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Teach also your children that they should give thanks to the Lord for His many undeserved blessings. When they have been in personal need, distress or sickness, they should lay in their prayers, thanksgiving before the Lord. They should not forget His undeserved mercies to them.

We find a clear example of family prayer in the person of Joshua. Joshua is an example for every God-fearing husband and father. He was resolved not only to serve the Lord but even if all others would not serve the Lord, he and his family would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15). Joshua made this decision. And we read about it in Joshua 24:2. When he made this decision, he was more than a hundred years old probably and he had remarkable zeal. And the

influence of this man of God was so strong that for several generations, the people indeed worshipped the Lord. Joshua 24:31, “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.”

You see, the impact of personal prayer can be strong and great for generations to come. And so, prayer will be a blessing for your family. When you pray, you may expect a blessing of God upon your family. The Lord is able to convert your children, and that’s why [you should] pray, also in their presence, for their conversion. Pray then, pray to God that they will be kept from the temptations of the world. He can cause your children to prosper and to grow up “like olive plants around your table,” Psalm 128, for the Lord hears prayer.

And then finally, some people wonder about the posture in prayer. In which physical manner should we pray? We mentioned already, we close our eyes and fold our hands. But really, the way we should pray is not really prescribed in Scripture. We read of some people kneeling during prayer. Paul kneeled with the Elders of Ephesus when they prayed. But we read of King Solomon, he stood before the whole gathering of the people, and he called upon the name of the Lord, 1 Kings 8:22. The Lord Jesus separated Himself from His disciples and kneeled down in prayer (Luke 22:41). But we read of standing in prayer in Mark 11: 25 and John 11:41. That’s a sign of devotion and humility. That’s what we should keep in mind: humility and devotion.

And so, we honor the Lord with our words, but also with our posture. But the core issue is our heart: how is our heart disposed. It can be very difficult for certain people to kneel. They can have pain in their knees. It can be tiresome to stand for a longer period of time in prayer. Therefore, let everyone be convinced in his own conscience how he or she should pray, as long as we do this with the heart. And so far, then some practical issues regarding prayer. Thank you.

Lecture 12

PRAYER LIFE OF PASTORS

Welcome to this lecture number 12 in the series of the Beauty of Prayer.

Now, today we hope to consider the prayer life of pastors, a very practical topic, and I hope also very useful. Many of you men are pastors, but also others who may not be engaged in pastoral work may still profit from this lecture.

So, all Christians are called to pray. “Praying always,” the apostle Paul says. But especially pastors are called to pray. They should be men of prayer. Think of the apostles, what they said in Acts 6:4, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” These two matters should characterize a pastor. This was the task of prophets in the Old Testament, think for instance of Samuel, who says in 1 Samuel 12:23 “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.” He considered prayer for the people, pastoral prayer, most important.

And so, we already saw before this, in 1 Samuel 7:5, that Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.” That was then prayer in a public setting. But Samuel also knew prayer in a personal setting, that he would pray for the people of God.

And so this is the task of prophets, of apostles. It’s the task of office bearers. A faithful pastor should often be on his knees asking the Lord for grace upon the members of the congregation. We read it many times in God’s Word, how the one prayed for the other. Think of Abraham who prayed for Lot. Moses, he prayed for the people. Job, he prayed for his friends. Aaron stood between the living and the dead; he prayed for the people of God. Daniel prayed for Jerusalem. In Acts 10:9 we read that Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. And in Acts 1:14, “These all continued in prayer and supplication with one accord.” In Acts 12 we read that the church, the early church at Jerusalem, prayed for the release of Peter from prison. Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

And so, the Lord Jesus Himself needed to pray. We find in Mark 1:35: “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there he prayed.” And in Luke 6:12, we read that the Lord Jesus prayed throughout the night. And also, the apostle Paul prayed extensively for the churches. Don’t you find it also as you read through the Apostolic Epistles that you find so often a reference given to prayer?

1 Corinthians 1:4–5, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” So, he was always thanking in his prayer.

Philippians 1:4, Always in every prayer of mine, for you all, making request. And he did this with joy.

And so, Philippians 1:9, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.”

Colossians 1:9, “We... do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

2 Thessalonians 1:11, “Wherefore also we pray always for you.”

Repeatedly we find that the Apostle Paul prayed much for the congregations that were given to his care. So, it's essentially important that those who labor in God's kingdom should be diligent in lifting up intercessory prayer. There's prayer that they need for themselves, prayer for light and grace, but also, intercessory prayer, praying for others around you.

You see, ministers of the Word are also just weak people in themselves. They also have their sins. They need to be reconciled to God. And through their sin they are unfit to proclaim the Word of God. And so, they need to humble themselves before the Lord, asking Him for grace to be faithful to His Word and that they would be enabled to preach and to teach the Word of God. And so, a servant of God needs fresh installments of God's grace to be able to proclaim His Word with love and with zeal. And this is all received in the way of prayer.

So they need to pray for themselves. But besides that, they need to pray for the members of the congregation. Think of the great example of the High Priest in the temple, that he went into the temple with the breastplate, and the 12 engraved names of the 12 tribes of Israel were upon his chest. And so, he stood before the Lord, as it were, praying for the 12 tribes of Israel. And so, let a pastor lay his members before the Lord in prayer.

Also, let office bearers pray for one another. Let ministers pray for one another. It will breed a spirit of love and of harmony.

You know pastors are often very busy in caring for their churches, and they can work hard. But with all their hard labors, they may be doing exactly the wrong thing. We may be neglecting the rich gold mine of praying down God's Spirit to work. We can use an example of a sailing ship. We can man the sails, trim them, tie them down. We can assure that they are of the best quality, and we take care to replace torn sails; but if there's no wind to blow in the sails, what will this benefit us? We need wind in the sails. And the wind starts blowing in the way of prayer.

The great missionary to China, James Hudson Taylor, was very much engaged in prayer. His life is characterized by ardent prayer. He prayed for everything he needed, and the Lord gave him in rich abundance, everything he needed. He prayed especially for the missionaries who were laboring in other parts of China. There were occasions when their lives were in danger because of riots, and then James Hudson Taylor would rise up several times in the night to pray for them, believing that prayer would protect these missionaries.

At another occasion, he prayed for missionaries in the far West of China at a time when riots and violent turmoil were rampant there. Hudson Taylor had not heard of them for a year, but he continued on praying, and he hoped that in spite of all the dangers and hostilities that the Lord was keeping them. And he also continually felt a burden to pray for them. And so he concluded they must still be alive. And the Lord did make all things well. After more than a year, he heard that they were safe and sound.

And so, Hudson Taylor saw the great need that inland China with its millions and millions of people would receive the gospel. And so, he prayed that God would give missionaries, that God would incline the hearts of Christians in the West to support their labors financially, and the Lord gave a bountiful answer to his prayers. He listens to the petitions of His people. He gives them far above what they expect. And at the end of Hudson Taylor's life, due to his labors and prayers, thousands of missionaries and indigenous workers were laboring to proclaim the gospel to the great people of China.

Hudson Taylor realized that faithfulness in the service of the Lord is of great importance. We must be faithful in every aspect of our work, also in the ordinary day to day matters. “A little thing is a little thing” he said, “But faithfulness in a little thing, is a great thing.” And especially he saw the need to be faithful in continual prayer. Repeatedly, he would pray together with his missionary workers. He realized that blessing does not come down because of our diligence, but true blessing comes from God.

James Fraser was another missionary. He labored after Hudson Taylor. James Fraser labored among the Lisu people at the beginning of the 20th Century in west China, and he tried to preach the gospel to them. But it didn't work. It was difficult. Nobody wanted to listen to him. He labored for years without any true blessing upon his

work. And then he found out that solid, lasting missionary work is done on one's knees. James Fraser was faithful in preaching God's Word, but he became increasingly aware that the prayers of God's people called down blessing upon the work. And these prayers can be lifted up by the missionaries themselves, and besides that also by people in the West who are never on the mission field, but who yet continually pray for blessing.

Fraser was convinced that blessing upon missionary work is giving by believing prayer.

And that's exactly what we find repeatedly in the New Testament. We mentioned already the apostle Paul. He also needed people to pray for him. He not only prayed himself, but he repeatedly requested other people to pray for him. Didn't he know that God is Almighty and that God can give whatever is pleasing to Him? Yes, of course the apostle Paul knew that, but yet he wanted people to pray for him.

Romans 15:30, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

And Ephesians 6:18-20, "Praying...for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly."

And 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course."

Hebrews 13:18, "Pray for us."

And so, the apostle Paul believed that the prayers of God's people would cause a blessing upon his labors. Prayer is of utmost importance. And especially office bearers are called to be ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to go out and proclaim the gospel, "Be ye reconciled to God." And their word should be solemn, as if it was a Word of God Himself. The preaching of a pastor must be a word that if people listen to it, they will be saved, but if they go against it and do not obey, they will perish forever in hell. That's how solemn the work of a pastor is.

In order for a pastor to bring God's Word, there needs to be unction from on high, and that's received in the way of prayer. By prayer, one receives power in his preaching. And so, a pastor who is called to pray must humble himself more than other children of God do. Every pastor must say to himself, 'I have not only sinned against God, and it's not just that I need forgiveness and reconciliation; but because of my sins, I am unqualified, unfit to proclaim this precious gospel. And yet, I am called to perform these duties.'

It's also a fact that indwelling sin will have a more severe impact upon God's servants than upon ordinary children of God. We can think of men like Isaiah, who saw his own inability and corruption. Think of a man like Moses who realized he could not speak, and of Jeremiah that he was too young. They all confessed that they were unable to open their mouths and speak, and yet they had to preach the Word of God. This is very humbling. Maybe you have experienced that too? That you felt your own inadequacy. And so, there needs to be prayer, not just to be right with God and to be led in a Christian life, but also to be enabled to be an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. In your own strength you can never do that.

And so, there needs to be continual prayer, and an office bearer, a pastor, needs fresh installments of God's grace to be able to proclaim His Word with love and zeal.

Let us also look at the practice of such intercessory prayer. When pastors lay the needs of their congregations before the Lord, we should mention our members by name, asking God to bless them. Now this is hard work. It takes time. Sometimes it take more time than you had initially allotted to it; but it's most important. We cannot convert one soul. You know the Lord can do marvelous things working among your people while you are just watching how the Lord is working. There are numerous examples in church history, and it's still happening. The Lord hears prayer; He inclines the hearts of His people. And therefore, pray with expectation because "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

So, pray therefore with expectation, but also pray with zeal. Pray with the awareness that you are calling upon the greatest and the most real power in existence, Almighty God, Who has promised to be a gracious God and Father to you. It's not that God needs intercessory prayer; He is independent of everything. And yet, as we mentioned earlier, God incorporates the prayers of His people in His plan of salvation. He delights in their prayers and is willing to hear them.

Also, be earnest in your prayers, serious. Take the kingdom of heaven with violence. Think of how Jacob pleaded with God at Peniel in Genesis 32:26, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Think of Daniel who was so earnestly pleading with the Lord. “Oh Lord, hear; oh Lord forgive; oh Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, oh my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (Daniel 9:19).

Pray also with faith. In Mark 11:24, “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when you pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Pray with faith, trusting in God’s care.

Pray also as you desire the honor of God’s name. Think of Joshua, how he pleaded in his prayer for the honor of God’s name, “What will thou do unto thy great name?” in Joshua 7:9, and how Moses pleaded in Exodus 32:12, “Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘For mischief did the Lord bring his people out to slay them in the mountains?’”

And then God’s honor is at stake. So, plead for His honor.

In order to pray, holiness is needed, personal holiness. That is, a life closely connected to God. We need to be dependent upon God. And actually, some authors have even said, the conversion of sinners and the well-being of the church depend on the degree of the pastor’s holiness. We find examples in Scripture of holy men who were richly used by the Lord. They were devoted and dedicated to God, and their labors were blessed. Barnabas, Acts 11:24, “he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord.”

The love of Christ should live in the heart of the pastor, and as Christ is moved with perishing souls, so the minister will also then have zeal and love for perishing souls. And he will pray and labor and strive in his inner chamber. And there the pastor will plead with God for their conversion. And there the pastor will be warmed in his own soul through the communion with God.

A pastor should be a pious man, a godly man, for a cold, worldly minded pastor is sure to have a cold church. A living pastor will have a church in which life and joy and prayer will abound.

And so, we can find examples that can be given of dedicated holy men, but holy men who yet at times labored under hardship. Yet they had blessing. Think of Isaiah. Isaiah labored, and yet he had to say, “Who hath believed our report?” (Isaiah 53:1). And yet, this prophet Isaiah is called the evangelist among the prophets. He has been a tremendous blessing. Nowhere do we find so clearly the Lord Jesus revealed in the Old Testament as in the book of Isaiah. So he met with hardships, yet he was blessed. He was a dedicated, holy man.

And so, a pastor must actually be called to be Christ-like. He must cultivate personal piety. He himself must be in the presence of God. And then, the closet of the pastor becomes a storehouse where he will be replenished. It will be a fountain where he may return to drink. It’s the upper room, where he may commune with the Lord Jesus. There the Holy Spirit will overshadow him. There he will receive grace and strength to do the tasks the Lord lays upon him. There he will become resolved to stand firm in the Lord. It’s in the inner room, in personal prayer, that battles are fought and won, that decisions are made. There he receives unquenchable love for the Lord Jesus and all-absorbing zeal for the glory of God and a love for the prosperity of the church. There he is linked to the inexhaustible resources of God.

A pastor must be a wholly devoted man. What fear is to a soldier, what weakness is to an athlete, what dishonesty would be to a businessman, that is what a low degree of piety will be to a minister. It would be to his dishonor. And no man is more highly honored than a devoted, consistent minister. But none is more despised than he who is faithless and inconsistent. Who can estimate the harm an unholy minister inflicts? His actions, his crimes will be told from east to west. It will be told beyond the seas Proverbs tells us. Its history will be translated into other languages. His bad behavior will be gloated over by the enemy, and nowhere will it be repeated without pain or injury. It will grieve the godly ones. It will encourage others to sin. And that’s all because of the sloppy, sinful conduct of a faithless pastor.

And so, a pastor needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be kept from floundering in God’s service. They should be kept from forsaking their calling, and not a day may pass without a pastor laying his petitions before the Lord, wrestling to receive the mind of Christ, to receive joy in the service of God. And that’s how power will be received in one’s ministry and in one’s official work.

Some pastors claim they are too busy for prayer. Well then, indeed they are too busy. How busy are you really? Can you not find time for prayer? Will we dare plead before the Lord Jesus, before His judgment throne, “Lord we had no time for prayer?” Our daily duties may not overwhelm us so that we would neglect prayer. Look at Scripture, [there are] many examples of men who were exceedingly busy, but they had an extensive prayer life:

Daniel at the court of the king, Nehemiah the same thing, Hezekiah king of Judah, David a man full of labor and wars for the Lord, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Peter, Cornelius. Yet, they were men of prayer.

And there is such blessing connected to intercessory prayer, such a sweetness that you will taste nowhere else. At times it will be a foretaste of heaven itself. To be familiar with the Lord is the sweetest thing here on the earth. It is a great privilege that will provide you with spiritual refinement. There the Lord will show you your deficiencies in your own character, that your own weakness will be revealed to you, and that you will combat these weaknesses.

Great men of God, who were at one time useful for the church, have fallen because of some sin. And as they look back, the reason why they fell into sin [was] because they neglected personal prayer. And they neglected the cultivation of their own soul. And what happens even more often is that if a minister does not fall into a great sin, but yet his preaching becomes dry and dull and lifeless, it's because of the neglect of personal prayer.

And then also ministerial laziness can set in. Because other people don't notice it if you skip personal prayer. They don't see it. And that's a sin frequently happening among pastors. They have so many pressing impulses to get straight to work, and so they postpone that work of personal communion. They think they are too busy, or it's too late, or it's too early. But how dreadful. Let prayer be the characterization of our ministerial work. How many blessings we may have missed through lack of prayer? We can scarcely guess. None of us can know how poor we are in comparison with what we might have been, if we had lived habitually, closer to God in prayer. Vain regrets are now useless. But instead, let there be a resolve to amend our ways of neglect.

We must be men of prayer. We will be men of prayer. Let us strive in prayer. Then our churches and our congregations will be blessed. And we will enjoy the presence of God in our lives. And that is wonderful.

The Lord bless you. Thank you.

Lecture 13

DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER

Welcome to lecture number 13 in the series of the Beauty of Prayer. Today we're going to consider the difficulties in prayer because personal prayer is not easy. When you try to pray, you will meet with all kinds of opposition. We may find it difficult to allot sufficient time for prayer. We may suffer from physical weakness, or from spiritual lack of strength. At times it will be hard to concentrate.

The evil one will try to distort our prayers by injecting all kinds of strange, foolish, and sinful thoughts exactly while we are praying. At times we will not even be able to use words, and then our needs are vented to the Lord, are laid before the Lord in the way of groaning and sighing. Memory of past sins will harass us, pain that others have inflicted upon us may come to the fore exactly during prayer.

The evil one will try to hinder our prayers because he is afraid of prayer because God is Almighty; and what God will do due to the prayers of His people, the devil does not know. That's why God's people are called to pray and persevere. A severe assault upon prayer is that the enemy will cause us to think that God will not hear our prayers. Then we accuse ourselves that we are carnal.

We see our sins, and then the thought can arise, "God will not hear our prayer." However, when we look at Scripture, we see remarkable instances of how the Lord heard prayers, even of sinful people, of unconverted people. These were people who are under [the] impression of the truth, and they believed God's Truth, while their hearts were still hardened and were not truly converted. Yet, the miracle is [that] God still heard their prayers.

For instance, King Ahab governed the 10 tribes of Israel. During his reign, he led the people in the country into the darkness of sin. He and Jezebel implemented idol worship as never before. He caused the people of Israel to go astray, and then Ahab sinned because he allowed Naboth to be murdered on false accusations. Then suddenly, the prophet Elijah met Ahab and proclaimed the royal house of Ahab would fall down, and they would all be killed, and Ahab too.

Then in response, the king tore his clothes; he put sackcloth on; he walked softly (I Kings 21:27). He had sorrow because of his sins. It was not that he had a true evangelical repentance, but he still humbled himself. He was very much afraid of the judgment of God, and then the Lord even heard his lamentations. Elijah had to go to Ahab and tell him that this curse would not come upon Ahab during his lifetime. Ahab received even more time to truly repent, so God heard a prayer of a sinful, unconverted sinner.

What shall we think of the men of Nineveh who repented upon the preaching of the prophet Jonah? The only thing that Jonah proclaimed to them was "40 days Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). The people of

Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast. They put on sackcloth, and their king arose from his throne. Normally, a king would not rise from a throne. He is king; he sits, but this king arose from his throne and covered himself with sackcloth and ashes.

They turned to the Lord in Jonah 3:9, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not.” We don’t read that they all became god-fearing people. We don’t read that Nineveh became a Christian nation. No, they remained heathens, and yet God heard their prayers. “God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and then God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not,” Jonah 3:10, an example [of] how the Lord hears even sinful people.

When we are afflicted that, because of our sins, God will not hear us, don’t believe those temptations or those thoughts. Cast them far from you. Little children when they pray may only have a childlike, a formal faith, but God will hear them. We can pray for true conversion because we do not know that life of conversion. God will hear such a prayer.

There are other difficulties that we may contend with as we seek to know a life of prayer. We can be very busy with our daily work. We may perform mental labors or physical work, and we can be so busy with our daily work that we devote all our time to that. It’s a temptation the devil casts before us. We mentioned that in a previous lecture, but we must be alert for this difficulty in prayer and overcome it.

We may not be devoured by our daily labor, and we may not allow the cares of daily life to crush us because then the good seed of the gospel will also be crushed, and there will be no spiritual fruit in our lives. On the other hand, because of the busyness of daily life, we can be even lazy, complacent, have no time to pray. We must be diligent. There’s only one thing necessary in life really, and that is to know, to love, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never may we allow our daily labors to interfere with the spiritual work of prayer. If we do not pray, then our work, however good it may be, will become sinful. Another hindrance to prayer is ignorance of the nature of God. That is that we do not realize the loving kindness of God and that we do not see His desire that He is willing to give all that is needed. Ignorance of the nature of God leads to a lack of faith, and that’s very detrimental to prayer life.

A lack of knowledge of God’s mercy, a lack of awareness of His bountiful goodness, that will be detrimental to prayer. Be aware [of] Who God is: full of loving kindness, gracious, willing to hear the prayers of His people, caring for them as the most loving Father. Be aware of Who God is that you are praying to. Another difficulty is that the evil one will try to distance us from the Lord. He will try to cause a distance between us and God.

That’s what he did to Adam and Eve in Paradise. He tempted them to sin. They listened to his lies, and then they withdrew themselves from the Lord. That’s exactly what the devil wanted to accomplish: that they would hide themselves, that they would distance themselves from God, and so rebel against Him. The devil is trying to lead people into a certain sin, causing a separation between them and the Lord.

We are to examine our lives daily and be alert that there will be no distancing between us and God. A very common hindrance to prayer is also worldliness: living for this world, being enamored by what this world has to offer, having love to the world, having pride of life. That’s very detrimental to prayer. We may not allow love to the world to be present in our lives. We may not have a worldly, cold attitude in our own souls towards others because that will hinder the access to God.

Prayer life will not be able to continue. The evil one will also cause difficulties by injecting terrible thoughts into the minds of God’s people, painful thoughts, self-reproach: ‘We have sinned too much; our sins are too great.’ The devil says, “You better stop praying. How dare you approach God with such unclean lips.” Repeatedly God’s people can become entangled with sin, and they hate it, and then the temptation is to stop prayer.

They find themselves to be unclean. We find an example of this in Zechariah 3:3. There you find the high priest Joshua standing before the Lord with filthy clothes. That’s a picture of his uncleanness and sinfulness. The devil is rebuking him and wants to curtail his work as high priest, but the Lord intervened for his servant, and spoke in verse 4, “Take away the filthy garments from him. Unto Zechariah the Lord says, ‘Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee. I will clothe thee with change of raiment.’”

When we become entangled with sin, we must confess it before the Lord that the Lord, in spite of our sins, would yet receive our prayers only because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another major difficulty in prayer is that we think that God does not answer our prayers. There can be times that it seems like that. It can

even be that the Lord does defer answering our prayers. He postpones the answer, but it doesn't mean that He is denying our prayers.

Often the Lord has special reasons for doing so, and He will grant our request at the most fitting time. There's an appointed time for deliverance to be granted. If we could take things in our own hands, we would deal foolishly. To use the example of a wound, you may have a bandage upon the wound. Now you can remove the bandage quickly and pull it off before the wound will be healed, while it would be better to leave the bandage there for a while, and then remove it.

The Lord also knows the best time to hear our prayers. You'll find an example of that in the Canaanite woman. The Lord meant to grant her request, and yet He postponed it so that she would cry more and more, so that her faith would increase. The Lord can withhold blessing so that we would be praying more fervently to receive it and that when the answer is given, we would realize this is God's work, not because of our doings.

Then we will value and esteem these blessings so greatly. Sometimes, the Lord can withhold an answer to humble us more because often God's people need to learn humility. They need to learn their weakness, their inability, like Joseph, who was a godly young man. But he was left for years in prison until the time was ready when he would be delivered, so he could be vice regent of Egypt and would be suitable and qualified to deliver his own family from famine.

He was taught patience and humility. At times, we are tempted to consider God's delaying an answer as a flat denial, and this hinders prayer. Well, at times, the Lord can deny us something, but the Lord also has something better in store for us. God does not grant all our requests. Think of Moses, how he pleaded with the Lord that he could enter the promised land in Deuteronomy 3. The Lord denied his request, but gave him something far better.

He will be taken up into glory, into [the] heavenly Canaan. Paul prayed that he might be delivered from this painful thorn in the flesh. He prayed three times for that, but the Lord said that His grace, God's grace, will be sufficient for him (II Corinthians 12:7-9). A thorn can make a person be humble and [keep a person] humble, that they would not elevate themselves. You see what Psalm 84:11 says, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

If it serves their good, God will not withhold any request from the upright. Let this be an encouragement for believing prayer, an encouragement to receive spiritual blessings for conversion, for growth and grace, for the saving of our families, for revival in our church and country. The Lord knows what is good better than we do. God is free in how He answers, but He will [answer] in His own time.

There are also certain struggles in prayer life. It's good to be aware of that. We mentioned in our last lecture, the 19th and 20th century English missionary in Southwest China, James Fraser. He experienced extensive spiritual struggles all related to prayer and his personal relationship to the Lord.

Fraser, a godly missionary giving himself to the service of the Lord and laboring hard in difficult circumstances, experienced severe depression as he labored for years on his own, proclaiming a gospel that nobody wanted to hear. He was suffering from a depressing sense of loneliness caused by daily routine of arduous study as he was alone with his books. Because of all this, he slackened in his daily communion with God. He describes that to us. The aim of this assault of the devil was to cut off communication with God; and to accomplish this, the devil diluted the soul of Fraser with a sense of defeat.

He covered him with a thick cloud of darkness. The satanic powers depress and oppress the spirit of God's child, and this in turn hinders prayer. It leads to unbelief; it destroys spiritual power in a child of God. This is something Fraser vividly experienced, and a strange and sinister shadow came upon him. He was perplexed; he found himself in deepening gloom. He was assailed by deep and treacherous doubts. Repeatedly, he was assaulted by thoughts such as, 'Your prayers are not answered. No one wants to hear your message. You better leave it all.'

He was even attacked by suicidal thoughts. The powers of darkness had Fraser isolated, and then he saw what was happening to him. He saw that it was a clear assault of satanic power, and then he offered deliberate resistance, definite resistance pleading the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross. This worked, and immediately the powers of darkness had to let go of him. The cloud of depression dispersed, he claimed deliverance on the ground of his Redeemer's victory on the Cross.

He even shouted his resistance to Satan, and all his dark thoughts collapsed there and then like a pack of cards to return no more. He experienced relief by repeating out loud appropriate verses of Scripture. It was like

crashing through opposition. He experienced what we read in James 4:7, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The devil had tried to isolate him to hinder his prayers.

Fraser experienced [that] we are not only to resist the devil or to resist sin, but we are also called to deliberately resist discouragement in prayer because prayer is the only weapon to drive back the forces of darkness. In his prayer life, James Fraser tells us how he at times could experience deep, personal communion with God. He felt the need of trusting the Lord to lead him in prayer, as well as in other matters. He experienced what Psalm 25 tells us, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him” (verse 14). Those who live closest to the Lord will understand His will.

We must pray to know His will. Too often, Christian leaders, pastors, they make their own plans. They work hard at them, and then earnestly ask God’s blessing upon them. It’s much better to wait on God in prayer and to know His plans before commencing. We must receive our prayers from God, and He will lead us in such prayer. It’s better to strive to know His will, and once we have the deep, calm assurance of His will in this matter, we put our claim in before God like a child does to his father.

That’s prayer of faith, and the devil detests such prayer because for the devil such prayer is an authoritative notice to retreat. He does not mind so much rambling, carnal prayers. They don’t hurt him much, but prayer of faith, wrestling before the Lord for an answer, that is important. Fraser also saw the need for personal discipline in regards to personal prayer. He found it very important to get up early before the day becomes lively, and before yours will be entangled with all kinds of activities of daily life.

Fraser found various places in the hills where he could pray. He had different places for different types of weather. He would be in caves, or in temples that were forsaken, where no one would be. That’s where he would be to pray to God. He would pray aloud, talking as a man talks to his friend. He would kneel in prayer. At times, he would walk up and down as he was praying. Prayer is the most important task for a Christian, and that’s why the devil attacks specifically this life of prayer.

The devil is fond [of letting] us wait for better opportunities and tells us to use the words “if” or “when,” so that we would put off prayer now. He tempts us to see ‘if there are better circumstances,’ or ‘when we have more time to pray,’ but the Scriptures never tell us to do that; we are to serve now, in the things that need to be done now, and so the Lord bids us to work, watch, and pray, but the devil suggests us to wait for a better opportunity.

Needless to say, this opportunity always lies in the future. Fraser realized [that for] the kingdom of God, carnal weapons are unable to gain the victory. Human willpower will not gain the victory. Carnal energy is no weapon in spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness. Yet, all the powers of hell are unable to annul the powerful influence of consistent, believing prayer. Fraser remarked that serving in God’s kingdom is a spiritual battle, and we must be prepared for serious spiritual warfare.

We need God’s strength for that, not our natural strength, but we may lean upon God’s everlasting arms and renew our strength continually (Deuteronomy 33:27 and Isaiah 40:31). Fraser wrote in his diary that we must pray through every aspect of our work in detail to receive the knowledge of His will, to gain wisdom in how to deal with people, grace to instruct people in the gospel. We need grace even in ordinary conversations, and certainly we need grace in preaching.

We need guidance regarding daily matters, and so we must mention our workers, the leaders, the helpers by name. Everything is dependent on God’s blessing, and such a detailed prayer is exhausting, but yet it is effectual to ascertain the will of God, and to obtain His highest blessing. In his prayer life, Fraser also became aware of defeats he suffered, such as discouragement, listlessness, or impatience.

He experienced that the indwelling of Christ was his most successful weapon against all kinds of sin. He drew strength from the living communion with God. And in these struggles, Fraser realized that you can be so entangled in the busyness of daily life that you’re unable to struggle and that the enemy is keeping you down. It’s a subtle trick of the enemy to get us occupied with superficial concerns like book selling, or language study, running a mission station, writing reports, correspondence, keeping accounts, building repairs, buying things, reading.

And so, you’re so busy with all kinds of secondary and trivial concerns that you neglect the primary calling: prayer. At times we can be working like people whose ship is stranded on a sandbank. You can push, but the ship stays there. You can do all your work, but it doesn’t help. The tide must come in; the grace of God must come in.

We need to pray, and that brings the tide in. At times you can go through struggles that the temptation tells you: 'I must give up, I can't go on anymore.'

Yet, God renews your strength, because you seek grace and strength from Him. If it is that we fall into certain sins, remember 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When you suffer opposition from others, remember Jeremiah 1:19, "They shall fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to deliver you."

The Lord will undertake for you. That's why prayer is of utmost importance. To mention again the experience of James Fraser, he first thought that prayer should have the first place, and that teaching [should have] the second place, but he then started to see that prayer should have the first, the second, and the third place, and then teaching the fourth place. He learned that by experience, by toiling for months and years with no fruit.

But then by prayer and a simple witness, miracles happened. It's like dry bones, and the Lord breathes into them (Ezekiel 37:1-14), and the outpouring of God's Spirit takes place. People become convicted of sin, and there is a revelation of the Lord Jesus to their hearts. It's a sign of the outpouring of God's Spirit, and they understand the truth, and God's love is poured out in their heart. They are anointed with power from God to resist evil, and you know God is willing to give these outpourings of His Spirit, willing to give far above what we stand in need of.

To overcome all these difficulties in prayer, and to receive the outpouring of God's Spirit, there are certain characteristics needed in prayer life. What are the characteristics in prayer that we should exercise ourselves in? They are humility, faith, love, and patience. The Lord has a special regard to those who are humble. The proud he knows afar off; the humble soul has high views of God, and low thoughts of himself (Psalm 138:6).

If the angels in heaven humble themselves, how much more should we who have sinned humble ourselves before God. Besides humility, there's also faith. There should be confidence and trust that God will give far above what we deserve. Nothing is too hard for Him, and although all other helps will fail, His arm will bring salvation (Isaiah 59:16). We may rest upon His promises, and let there also be love.

Let us have love to our fellow brethren. Let us not harbor any wrong and ill feelings to them. Let us exercise love to the Lord, knowing His love, what He has done, and that we, in the spirit of love, should pour out our heart before the Lord. Also having patience, persevering in prayer. Praying for God's Spirit continually, not giving up.

Realizing God will hear like David said, "I will wait patiently for the Lord." Then we also see what he says in Psalm 40:1, "He inclined his ear unto me, and he heard my cries." You see, be patient in prayers and be encouraged, because the Lord Jesus is our Advocate in heaven (1 John 2:1). We may have access to God the Father by the Spirit and through the Son. And God will give far above what we need, or will even pray for. Thank you.

Lecture 14

BLESSINGS OF PRAYER

Welcome to lecture number 14, which is the last lecture in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. In this last lecture, we wish to consider the blessings of prayer because there are rich, wonderful blessings attached to prayer. It is thrilling. It is wonderful and exciting. In Scripture, who were the ones who were blessed? They were men of prayer. We see how they prayed and that they were blessed in their daily life, and they were truly kept by God, and they prospered. Think of Abraham, but also think of Abimelech. Abimelech was also rich. Abraham was rich. But who was blessed? It was Abraham. Laban had many possessions just like Jacob, but Jacob was blessed. Saul was king just like David, but David was blessed.

Those who are blessed were men of prayer: Abraham, Jacob, David. We think of Daniel, Hezekiah, Cornelius, and Paul. They were all richly blessed because they were men acquainted with personal prayer. So, there are rich promises connected to prayer. The Lord hears the needy when they cry to Him. How many times did David not cry out of great need; and [how many times was] Moses standing repeatedly for impossibilities—standing before the Red Sea, standing before murmuring people, being in situations where there was no food, no water, standing against enemies who were attacking the people—and the Lord repeatedly delivered him?

The Apostle Paul, with all his daily cares for the congregations, being continually in danger, having suffered robberies, shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, thirst, imprisonments, and yet, every time the Lord delivered him and led him through the hardships. Paul did not complain about the hardships because he had trust that God would lead him through, that God would bless him, because God hears prayer. Scripture is full of that. Think of Psalm 34 verse 6: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” Is this not what can be written under the lives of every child of God? That’s why the Lord can deliberately at times lead them into certain struggles and difficulties so that they despair of their own strength, and they flee to God, and the Lord delivers them.

So, the Lord also encourages them in advance. John 15:7, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” God hears prayer, for He says to the Prophet Isaiah 65:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” You may be convinced that in the way of personal, upright prayer the Lord will hear you. In prayer you may say, “Surely, Lord Jesus, because of Thy meekness we will follow Thee, hearing that Thou dost not despise the poor sinner, that Thou hast not despised the penitent thief on the cross, and neither hast Thou rejected the weeping woman who was a sinner, or the beseeching Canaanite woman, or the woman caught in adultery, and neither

hast Thou rejected the praying publican, or the denying disciple, nor the persecutor of the disciples. And in the scent of this sweet-smelling ointment, we will follow Thee and trust that Thou shalt not despise us as we come before Thee begging for Thy grace.”

God hears prayer, but it's through prayer that God draws you close to Himself. The apostle says somewhere to Timothy, “Exercise thyself to godliness.” How could Timothy do that? By means of prayer. Through continual prayer, you are drawn close to God. There, in prayer, you will experience the goodness, the grace and the mercy of the Lord. It is the best thing on earth to live close to the Lord. Then, you stand in His strength. In this way of living close to the Lord, ministerial work will be invigorated. Your personal life will be richly blessed. People notice when you have been in the presence of God. That will radiate in your life, in your actions, in your demeanor. It's in this way that you receive spiritual strength and stamina to fulfill the task God has laid upon your shoulders.

By prayer, you taste God's goodness. It's even at times a foretaste of heaven, the sweetness connected to personal prayer, a sweetness you can taste nowhere else. Heaven can be so close to you during prayer that one experiences a true inner peace with the Lord, that the Lord would enlarge love to Himself in your heart. There will be an unction upon your spiritual life. The Lord will enable you to carry on, providing you with grace and courage. Also, in difficult days, you will find out that as your day, so shall your strength be (Deuteronomy 33:25). In prayer you taste God's goodness.

Prayer also uncovers your shortcomings. It's through prayer that you become aware of your deficiencies. We mentioned that earlier already in a previous lecture, but now we must highlight this. Because if sins continue in your life unchecked, they will damage your work. So-called small sins can be highly detrimental to your work. You can be cold, indifferent to needs of people. You can deal harshly with people, even while you don't even want to be like that, but you're still doing it. These little foxes, they spoil the vineyard. They will prove to be highly detrimental to your work.

It's very good to become aware of your personal weaknesses and besetting sins, and the Lord shows you this in the way of prayer because through prayer God's Spirit leads you and points out to you your shortcomings. Then, in prayer there is the opportunity then to confess these sins and to ask for grace to combat these sins. Now the blessing of prayer is that prayer gives security to God's children. It provides safety to them because you call upon the Almighty God Who hears the cries of His people, and their cries are engaging His power and goodness for their wellbeing and safety. You need God to carry on. You need the Lord to show Himself strong in your life. You flee to His name as a tower of defense, and you rely upon His everlasting arms. You need His strength, His security, His protection. If God be for you, who can be against you (Romans 8:31)?

Then He will give you strength to even do things you never expected yourself to be able to do, but you were not able to do them, but God does it through you. He gives you words. He gives you stamina. He gives you safety. Then, the world becomes weak in comparison to the strength and the grace of Almighty God. The world can boast about many pleasures and allurements, but a Christian receives strength to resist them all. God gives the privilege of being adopted as a child of God, that you're being filled already now with a foretaste of eternal weight of glory, fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore. How can a world with all its allurements compare to the pleasures of God's right hand? When the Lord is close to you, you will not desire the world. You will look with disdain upon the world, feeling sorry for those people because you have found the Pearl of great price. You are kept safe from the temptations and the allurements of the world because prayer gives you safety.

Prayer also undermines the work of Satan. The devil is a great adversary. An ardent prayer will spoil the work of Satan. The powers of Hell have felt the force of prayer. That's why Christ commanded His disciples to pray that they would not enter into temptation. Under assaults of the devil, we should look unto Christ. By prayer, we should confess our sins. By prayer, we may receive grace of God to resist the devil. If we have fallen into sin, confess this as soon as possible, for then Satan's accusing mouth is stopped, and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness, and peace with God is restored. Through prayer, the Lord renews grace and strength to resist the temptations of the devil. The Lord assures us that His grace is sufficient and that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (II Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer leads us to the God of peace Who has promised to trample Satan under our feet shortly (Romans 16:20). In prayer, we receive wisdom to understand the deceit of the devil. Through prayer, wisdom will be increased.

Love to the Lord will be nurtured, and our hearts will be closely knit to the Lord, and so we will be kept from temptation, and the alluring strength of Satan will be undermined.

Prayer also weakens the flesh because we have still our flesh and the sinful desires and lust of the flesh. These lusts, they wage war against our souls. What does David do to obtain the victory over his lusts? He prays against them. Cleanse me from secret faults, and keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Prayer will kill corruption. Through prayer, sanctification, holiness, [and] dedication to God will take place. Grace is received, and mortification of the flesh is accomplished in the way of secret prayer.

Let us also consider various admonitions to persevere in prayer so as to receive the blessings of prayer. Certain admonitions, certain guidelines on how to pray. Pray with boldness. To gain blessing upon our prayers, be bold in your prayer, because God is more than able and willing to grant you your requests. They add to His honor. Pray therefore with boldness. Be aware that you are calling upon the greatest Power in existence, and He has promised through His Son to be a most gracious God and Father to you.

We read in Scripture so many examples of people praying. Think of Samson praying while he's standing there between the two pillars. He begged God, "Grant me one more time, and strengthen me, oh, Lord" (Judges 16:28), that he would fulfill his calling as being a judge upon Israel. Think of so many other examples in Scripture of people praying. Nehemiah praying that God would enable him to shield Jerusalem and its people from the attacks of Sanballat and Tobias, and that he himself would be faithful in leading the people. Think of prayer, even of the servant of Abraham going on this strange errand to find a wife in Padanaram for Isaac. How could he do it? He prayed, and he prayed with boldness. Pray with boldness. Daniel, Jacob, we saw those examples already and how Moses, in humility, he pleaded for God's nearness.

Also, pray in faith. Believe that your prayers make a difference. "Ask, and it shall be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). He is willing to grant you your request to His honor. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 9:29, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Praying without faith is like cutting with a blunt knife. It doesn't work. And therefore, Mark 11:24, "I say unto you what thing soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." Pray in faith.

Also, pray always. Again, we should emphasize the need not to neglect prayer, but to be always engaged in prayer. There are various reasons for this, why we should always praying. God is always ready to hear. He looks down upon this earth. He is listening to those who seek him diligently. He can give far above what we imagine or hope. John 4:23, "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Isaiah 59:1, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." We should be always praying because Christ is always interceding. He helps the believers by lifting up their prayers to God in Heaven. Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

We should also be praying because the Holy Spirit is ready to help us in our weakness. He gives grace and ability to pray. Therefore, be always in prayer because the Spirit is always ready to instruct us, to enliven us. He is willing to relieve us from our deadness. He enlarges our hearts in laying our desires before the God of all grace. He strengthens us to wrestle for a blessing. He pleads along with us with groanings that cannot be uttered, Romans 8.

We should be praying always because the devil is always ready to attack us. He's compared to a lion. And when a lion retreats, he always retreats going backwards. He keeps his eye focused upon you. That's how he retreats. He's always ready to make another attack. You know, that's how the devil is always at work. Be alert for the attacks of the devil, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). By all these designations, the apostle Paul is referring to Satanic powers, the devil and his demons always ready to attack, and therefore be always in prayer.

We should always be in prayer because our natural inclinations to sin easily rise up, and they are against us. When we neglect prayer, the ugly head of inner corruption rises up. It regains strength. David should have been praying instead of walking on the roof of his house and looking at that woman. If he would have been praying always, he and his family would have been spared from much misery, but he did not pray. He looked.

While Israel was fighting against Amalek, as long as Moses had his hands lifted up to Heaven, Israel gained the victory. But when Moses' hands fell down, Amalek gained the victory. This is an illustration of the necessity

of continual prayer and why prayer is indispensable. We cannot really fully put into words, but let's recognize the fact, even when we find it difficult to explain it fully. Do we really think the church would exist as it does now without the High Priestly prayer of Christ? He continually prays. Let Him be our example.

Also, combine your prayer with meditation. Train yourself in your prayer to reflect upon the miracles of God's salvation. Meditate upon the curse that rests upon us because of our sin, that we are polluted, that our souls are affected by sin, our wills are ruined by sin; and consider the love of God against our corruption, the love of the Father, that the Father has loved you from all eternity, that He has set His eye upon all of His children, and that God loves also His righteousness, and that He desires that His righteousness would be fulfilled, that He cannot have dealings with you unless a payment is given for your wickedness. So, God was willing to give His Son to die in your place.

What a great love of God the Father, and what a love of God the Son that He was willing to come. He was the rich God. Yet, He humbled Himself so deeply, so far. He was entitled to everything, and yet He chose such great humiliation. During His life on earth, He had nothing that He could call His own, no cradle, no place to lay His head. He didn't even have His own grave. The last thing He had, His clothes, were even taken from Him. Such love in order that you would be saved, reconciled to God.

Think of the love of God, the Holy Spirit, that He formed the body of Christ in the womb of Mary, that He anointed the Lord Jesus and equipped Him to perform His work, and that He applies the work of Christ to the heart of a sinner, and that He draws this sinner to Christ, and He continually leads that sinner. Oh, meditate on that great love of the Triune God! Don't dwell quickly upon Them with hasty thoughts, but dwell deeply upon Them. Meditate on Them. Then you will experience how the love of God starts to burn in your heart. Because instead of the earth opening its mouth to devour us, as happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram, that's what we also deserve; instead, heaven opens itself by this great love of God. He gives life instead of Hell. He gives love and Heaven. He gives grace for grace.

The Son has become your Brother. The Holy Spirit has become your Comforter. God has become your Father. Oh, be overshadowed by the love of the Sacred Trinity. This is the peace of faith. This formed the strength of the martyrs. This was the joy of old Simeon. This is the honor of God. It's so good to meditate in your prayers upon Who God is.

Through prayer, we also receive God's grace because, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23). God is pleased to answer prayers. Again, we highlight this. Elijah, he prayed that the rain would stop, and it stopped for three and a half years. Then, he prayed again, and it started to rain. Through prayer, the sun stood still in the days of Joshua. In the days of Hezekiah, the shadow of the sundial went back 10 degrees because the Almighty power of God did it all. Through prayer, thunder and lightning descended from heaven to confuse the enemies. Through prayer, God gave rain when it was needed. Through their prayers, the Red Sea was divided. Through prayers, the Lord gave fruitfulness and blessing to the earth.

Some say if Steven had not prayed that God would forgive them their sin, Saul of Tarsus would never have been converted. Through prayer, prison doors have been opened. In the days of King Asa, 1 million soldiers were vanquished by prayer. Think of the privilege that Queen Esther had to come into the presence of the king. But, we have a far richer privilege, to come before the King of kings, Who has all might and power upon earth. Therefore, God's children may go forth from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7).

One of the English godly ministers once wrote, "The true Christian is effectually marching on in pursuit of his victory. He keeps his enemy in his eye. He is cautious. He is watchful. He dispatches messengers, his prayers, his sighs, his tears, to bring down fresh supplies from above. His prayers speak. His sighs cry. His tears have a tongue, and they all go up with the same message." This is a quote from the English Puritan, Richard Alleine, from the 17th century.

You see, it's an inestimable miracle that God has given this opportunity for us to pray, and that He has given us His Word. Be dependent upon His Word. Study His Word. Combine that with prayer, for how we need God's Spirit to breathe through us, the entirety of our lives, especially pastors. Then you will be faithful. Then you will be equipped.

Think of the example of a harp. The person who plays the harp comes and sits beside a harp. He or she starts to play, to pluck the strings, and the whole instrument becomes alive. Now, you are the harp. God's Spirit comes

alongside, and He fires your soul. He touches the emotions. He brings the melody of the heart out, and the music begins to ascend. It's the music of the soul and the love of the soul for God. So, let us pray that "the spirit of grace and supplication be poured out upon us and among our people" (Zechariah 12:10).

When we pray, be not content with some outward forms or simple words, but strive, and wrestle, and pray for the grace of God and for the help of the Holy Spirit. He will teach you. He will lead you through your lives as pastors, as Christians, and He will bring you to that place where one day there will be no more prayers, but there it will only be adoration. Then, God will receive all glory, praise, thanksgiving, honor, and adoration till all eternity. There we will receive the fullest awareness of the beauty of prayer. The Lord bless you all and make you to be fruitful in His service. Thank you for watching and listening to these simple lectures on the Beauty of Prayer.