

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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1. THE LORD'S PRAYER PART I Based on Matt. 6:7-15

Paul Aurandt in his book, *Destiny*, tells of the powerful impact a single father can have on a whole society. Norman's father was a salesman in Connecticut. He did not like people who were different from himself, and that was almost everybody. In other words, he was a bigot. He constantly insulted people, and cut them down for their race or color. Women were degraded, and his own wife was not allowed to speak her mind. Home life was one of constant tension with fighting and shouting. Norman's father ended up involved in some shady deal on the sale of stocks.

Norman was 12 years old when his father got out of prison. But this did not change him at all. He was still as narrow, dogmatic, and critical as ever. Norman still loved his father, for in spite of all his weaknesses, he had a good and loving side to him. So when Norman grew up he made his father's image one of the most popular images America has ever known. Norman became a famous TV producer, and one of the biggest hits of all time was Norman Lear's Archie Bunker in *All In The Family*. Archie Bunker was not portraying a figment of someone's imagination. He was portraying the life of a real father. His views and values were those of Norman's own father.

When we come to the life and teachings of Jesus we need to recognize also that they represent the views and values of a real father. Jesus was the express image of the Father. He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." If we want to know what God is like, we look at Jesus, for He is the full and final revelation of God the Father. Henry Drummond said, "We can unlock a man's whole life if we watch what words he uses most." The word Jesus used most for God was Father. He calls God Father 17 times just in the Sermon on the

Mount, and 12 of them are here in chapter 6. He uses this name for God in this chapter more than anywhere else in the synoptic Gospels. This is the God is Father chapter. I call your attention to this so you do not think we relate to God as Father only because the Lord's Prayer begins with our Father. Jesus makes clear that everything we do is to be done in the Father-child relationship. All we do is done either in obedience or disobedience to our heavenly Father, and so the Christian life could properly be called, all in the family.

A Sunday school teacher, after a service on the omnipotence of God, asked her class if there was anything God could not do? There was silence, and then one little guy put up his hand. She felt disappointed, thinking he must have missed the point of the lessons. She asked, "What do you think God can't do?" He said, "Well, He can't please everybody." That, of course, is literally true, for not even our heavenly Father can please everybody, even those in His own family.

The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates this. The Father was an ideal father, and there is not one thing you can detect in him that makes him a poor father. Yet he had two sons, and both of them were not pleased by his values. The younger son did not want to stay around and live under his ideal love. He wanted to take off and live an independent life. The father did not please him enough to hold him at home. The elder brother, on the other hand, was not pleased with his father when he accepted the rebel back. Here were two boys who had as good a father as anyone could ever have, yet they were not pleased.

The point is not, that it is impossible to be a good father, but that it is impossible for a good father to always please his children. Not even the only perfect father, who is God, can do this. The result is God's children all through history are like the two sons in the parable of the Prodigal. One side goes to the extreme of stressing God's justice and discipline, and this causes many to want to leave the family. The other side stresses the love and compassion of the father, and this makes the other side feel like walking out of the family, because this seems to them to make God a wishy-washy indulgent parent. The family of God is often torn by the conflicting pictures of the nature of God's fatherhood. Is He a Divine Domineering Disciplinarian, or is He a Passive Permissive Parent?

History would indicate that people tend to lean one way or the other depending on what kind of an earthly father they had, and whether they accepted or rejected their father's values. Whole cultures have followed one or the other concept of God. Eastern, or the Greek church, tended to develop the idea of God as the Father-Creator, and the Father-Redeemer. His main purpose in history was to restore His fallen family to Himself through our Redeemer-Brother, the Lord Jesus.

The Western, or Latin church, followed Tertullian, the brilliant theologian who was also a lawyer, who established a more legalistic approach. God was the judge, and the penalty must be paid, and so if you have no alternative you are condemned. God, however, provides a substitute to take your condemnation. It is the Lord Jesus who sets you free. Both of these have a Biblical foundation, but our Western emphasis can be easily distorted, and lead to all kinds of fears of God as a condemning judge. The problem with trying to lock God into one form of fatherhood, or another, is that the universe cannot contain God, let alone some

form, category, or description that men formulate for their own convenience. God's fatherhood is as varied as it needs to be to meet the needs of all His children.

God is Father to both the legalistic and the freedom loving. Both the Prodigal and his elder brother were equally sons of the same father. The father is not responsible for the weaknesses of either son. He did not want his youngest to go off and live for sensual pleasure. He knew that road would end with hogs and humiliation. But neither did he want his eldest to be such a legalistic snob, who would rather see his brother perish than be welcomed back and forgiven. The father was not the problem, but he was the center of that family, and the only hope of the families survival. The father is the only hope of the two sons ever being reconciled.

So it is in the family of God. The fatherhood of God is the foundation for all Christian unity. Christians will differ on many things, even on the meaning of fatherhood, but the reality of that fatherhood is the basis for their oneness. And that is why the first word of the Lord's Prayer is OUR. Not any father in heaven, but our Father. Not the father I have created in my own image, for my own satisfaction, but the father of all the great family of God, with its multiplicity of personalities, and varied backgrounds and cultures. Here is all the world of human complexity tied up in divine simplicity: OUR FATHER. It is the same concept we have when we say our nation. The United States is one nation, yet 50 states. It is E Pluribus Unum-or, the many in one. Such is the family of God.

The Lord's Prayer, therefore, is a family prayer. You will search in vain to find an I, me, my, or mine in this prayer. It is always the plural you will see: Our Father, give us our daily bread, forgive us, and lead us not into temptation. Jesus said we are to get alone to pray, but not to pray for ourselves alone. You are to shut out the sight and sound of others, but never the sensitivity to the needs of others. The poet captures this truth so beautifully-

**You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer,
And even once say "I."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer,
And even once say "My."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer,
And not include another;
You cannot ask for daily bread,
And not include your brother.
For others are included
In each and every plea,
From the very beginning
It never once says, "Me."**

We are not getting into the issue of the universal fatherhood of God, for that would take us down a different road, and we have plenty to see on the road we are traveling, so let me just state what all can agree on: The "our" here certainly includes all who have received Jesus as their Savior, for John makes it clear that as many as have received Him have been given the right to be called sons of God. This means that private prayer still has a social

function. Jesus expects that we will come before our heavenly Father with an awareness that we part of a family. This awareness will make a world of difference in both our prayer life, and our life in general. It should make us more selfless, and aware of the needs of others in the family. We have a natural tendency to be self-centered.

A mother asked her boy what he learned from the story of the Good Samaritan? He said, "I learned that if I am ever in trouble somebody should help me." This is the tendency of all God's children, to see life only from the perspective of their own need. This is what makes it so hard for God to please everybody in the family. But if we come before God as, our Father, we will come with a broader perspective that goes beyond self needs. None of us would consider it proper for a father of four to grant all the requests of one at the expense of the other three. Such a father would be spoiling the one, and being mean and unfair to the others.

The gist of what Jesus is saying by the form of this prayer is, all of us should come before God with assurance that He will grant us all the basic needs of life. But when we branch out into other areas, we need to recognize that our requests may not be consistent with fairness to the whole family. If I desire it to be a beautiful day, and pray for sunshine, I need to do so with the spirit of, not my will but thine be done, for I know the wider family needs may demand rain. I can't expect God to be an indulgent Father to me, and grant my every whim, regardless of the consequences for the whole family.

There are a lot of issues in history where Christians are on both sides, and legitimately so, for their needs, background, and values, take them down different roads. It is legitimate also that they both seek God's guidance and providence to achieve their goals. But they should always have the perspective that God does not choose sides in the family, but seeks for reconciliation. We must come with the spirit of plurality, and say, our Father. He is the Father even of those sons who differ with me. Therefore, not my will be done, or their will be done, but Thy will be done. What is best for the whole family should be what we desire.

The "our" of the Lord's Prayer is the key to harmony and peace in the family of God. It can do wonders for unity in the home as well. The assumption is that the father will do what is best for the family whether or not he does what is best for you. That will make you sad or glad depending on seriously you take the "our." Abraham Lincoln told the story of the farmer who married a woman he thought was as meek as a dove. She was until one day he said to her, "I'm going to enlarge me dairy." She said, "That is our dairy dear." He was shocked at her claim, and stubbornly said, "My dairy, dear." She went wild and began to clobber him with the skillet, and in self-defense he fled to the bedroom and crawled under the bed. After a while she appeared at the door and said, "Now what are you doing?" He responded from under the bed, "I'm just looking for our pants dear."

What husband has not had to have a little help to get passed the, "My car, my money, my whatever," thinking. Some never make the transition, but the fact is, only when, "our" comes through is unity and oneness becoming a reality. That is the goal in marriage, and in the family of God, and that is why prayer needs to begin with the word "our." Jesus did not teach any prayer for an only child, for God has many children, and this is a major

importance in our approaching Him in prayer. No request can be consistent with His will if it is detrimental to others in the family. The Prodigal got his fair share, but the father did not give him any of his brother's inheritance. A wise father must constantly balance his giving so as to be fair and just to all of his children.

The very nature of prayer, because of this "our" means many prayers will not be answered. This is another subject we will not pursue now, but we need to recognize what is true for human parents. Have you granted your children every request they have made? Have you even attempted to fill the endless requisitions of their never ending need, and unquenchable greed? If so, you already know why God does not answer all prayers. Much prayer is as unanswerable as your children's request of you. When our grandson was little he had days when all he wanted was cherrios. If you gave heed to his every plea for them he would never eat anything else. Many prayers get off to a false start, for they begin with a request, not to our Father, but to my Father. That is, it is a purely selfish request with no regard to the rest of the family. We cannot expect God to grant our every wish regardless of how it affects others.

We need to see that the reason the our is so vital to successful prayer is because every defect and neurosis there is in the human family, because of poor fatherhood images, is also a part of the family of God. There are Christians everywhere who have the right concept of God in their heads, but do not have it real in their hearts. Their views of fatherhood are distorted by many factors. Robert Frost gives an example in his book, *Our Heavenly Father*. A gifted Bible teacher told of her tragic childhood because her parents took the discipline by fear approach. All parents use it sometime, but it was their specialty.

Beside constant threats, they once packer her suitcase and dragged her down the stairs saying they were going to give her away. She became hysterical, and begged for one more chance. She was constantly told that God would punish her if she was bad, and each time she fell and skinned her knee this was used to inform her that God was punishing her. It is not hard to understand why her image of God was that of a sadistic fiend whose greatest joy was the suffering he could inflict. She grew up and studied the Bible for herself, and came to grasp a totally different view of her heavenly Father, but the emotional scars were still in her heart.

Ten of thousands of God's children have had such scars from false teachings, and the experiences of their youth. One of the most common problems Christians have in their inner life stem from bad father images. Their healing demands that they go beyond the, my father level, to the our father level, and see in God all they never had in their earthly father. The beginning of the Lord's Prayer could bring healing to many who can be brought to see that the our Father represents the ideal father, and not the fallen father they have come to fear.

Absolutely tender,
Absolutely true!
Understanding all things!
Understanding you!

**Infinitely loving,
Exquisitely near,
This is God our Father,
What have we to fear?**

This is a message of good news that millions need to know and believe to be happy members of the family of God. We are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and this one word OUR can be a feast that will develop our spiritual muscles, and make us mature sons and daughters.

The point Jesus is making by this opening word is not that prayer is never personal and self oriented. Jesus prayed prayers that were totally self-centered. He said things like my God, my God why has Thou forsaken me. Life is full of occasions when we cry out to God for personal needs that have little to do with others in the family. These are valid concerns, and are not signs of selfishness at all.

Selfishness comes in, however, and dominates our lives when we loose an awareness of the family, and cease to approach God as our Father in most of life's issues. Prayer then becomes a method whereby we seek to manipulate God so He is always on our side in the world of competition.

- 1. God help my team to win.**
- 2. God help my stock to rise.**
- 3. God help my interest to come out on top.**

We do not consciously think these selfish things, but that is the inner motive that drives us. We have lost sight of the our, and family nature of prayer.

The more we become conscious of the our, the more we will recognize both teams have Christians playing, and both want victory. The only honest prayer, therefore, is, help us to do our best, and thy will be done. If God, in His providence, wills to shift the balance in favor of your opponent, as part of the family, you know it was for the good of the whole family. If the victory goes to you, you also know it is no basis for pride, as if God loves you more than His other children. It simply means, God either stayed neutral, and your team has superior skills, or God providentially tipped the scales in your favor for values that go beyond your personal need, for the good of the family. In prayer, as in all other activities, are ultimate goal is not self-satisfaction, but the pleasing of God. That is why the first three petitions of this prayer focus on God before there is any mention of personal need.

Christians do not realize how they hurt one another by their false use of prayer. It actually becomes cruel to use prayer as a self-centered means of excluding the rest of the family. People will say, "I prayed, and God brought my son home from the war." This said, by one Christian to another who also prayed, but whose son did not come back, can be cruel. Others might say, "I prayed and my cancer was healed." This can be a low blow to the family where cancer is not healed, even though they prayed with equal fervency and deep faith. It is not that we should not praise God and give public testimony to His blessings in answer to prayer, but that we should recognize that it was the Father's good pleasure to so respond to us, and not our superior faith or worth compared to others in the family. In other words, whether prayer be answered or denied, the true family spirit is the same: Thy

will be done. It was for the good of all the family that Jesus did not escape the cup He so much dreaded. He drank it to the last drop, not because there was anything in Him worthy of such suffering, but because it was necessary for the whole family.

History is full of examples where Christians have suffered and died, not for anything in them that demanded it, but for the sake of the whole body. Some Christians suffer much, and other suffer little. It is not because God plays favorites in the family. God is no respecter of persons, but is a fair Father. If there is one son whom He did favor, it was His only Begotten Son, and He suffered more than any in the family. There are many mysteries, and much we do not grasp about the plan and will of God, but the point of this pattern prayer for the whole family of God is to recognize we are all in it together. The goal is not to come out on top, but that our Father will be gloried, and that His kingdom will come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That is the primary purpose of this prayer, and the focus that unifies us and makes the family one.

Their are millions of born-again Christians in both of the major parties of our nation. They are Christians who disagree on many political issues, and theological issues as well. They will tend to pray for that which supports their party. This is perfectly natural, but they need to recognize the valid concerns of others in the family, and not pretend that theirs is the only perspective that God should be supporting. In other words, how much you read into this one little word that begins the worlds most universal prayer will change your theology, your politics, and your attitudes and actions on every issue of life. If God is my God, and my God only, then I will use God for my ends, and my Christianity will be primarily competitive. If God is our God, then my goal will be primarily cooperative, for the good of the whole family.

I do not think any of us can fully escape the individualistic and competitive spirit of our culture, and we shouldn't, for there are many values in it. But we should always examine it in the light of the Lord's prayer. This will enable us to keep it in balance so we do not let the competitive spirit rob us of the cooperative spirit. This is vital to the family spirit of those who desire to be truly Christlike. This means the successful prayer is one we have already looked at as being, secret prayer, and simple prayer. Now we see it is also to be selfless prayer.

The goal of prayer is not to get what you want, but to get what God wants for the whole family. If that means you must give up your personal desire, then so be it, if that is what is best for the family. The Pharisees got what they wanted, and Jesus said that was their reward. Their own self goals of self glory and public acclaim is what they got, but they missed the only reward that really matters: The reward of being cooperative with God in getting His will done on earth, and pleasing Him. This may cost some personal dreams, but if it is best for the family, and the purpose of God, the reward will more than outweigh what is given up. Competition does get something, but cooperation gets everything that really matters.

Immaturity in the family of God is evidence by a selfish and competitive spirit. We see it in Corinth where they were saying, "I am of Apolos," "I am of Paul," "I am of Cephas." The Christians of Corinth had so many family problems because the spirit of competition so

dominated them that the spirit of cooperation could not get a foot in the door. That is why Paul had to stress the matter of love. Agape love rises above selfishness and competition, and makes cooperation the dominate motive. No Christian is a mature and successful Christian until the spirit of cooperation dominates. Such a Christian takes very seriously the implications of the, our Father.

2. OUR FATHER Based on Matt. 6:9-15

A man who worked in a Ford plant for many years just quit for no apparent reason. When he was asked why he did it he said, "All I did everyday was to screw nut number 999 to bolt number 999 for years and years, and if I keep on doing this much longer, I shall be nut number 999 myself." Automation brings many blessings in the material realm, but it can also be a curse when it turns men into robots. The debate is, do men control the machine, or does the machine control men?

Dr. Glenn Frank declares, "The indictment brought against our civilization is this: Man is losing control over the machine. He machine is destroying body, worth, and beauty." It is already a proverb in Africa-"An old man is one who remembers when people were more important than machines." The machine is making man more and more materialistic and mechanistic in his attitudes and values. People are becoming secondary, and life is becoming more impersonal. A machine wakes us up in the morning, makes our breakfast, takes us to work where we park in a machine operated parking lot, take another machine to the proper level, and spend the rest of the day operating a machine or a computer. After this they go through the same process to get back home where they spend the evening being entertained by a machine. The machine reigns as king.

At the University of Seattle there is a painting where the great wheels of industry, and skyscrapers, and factory chimneys are converging on the crust and prostrate body of a man. The title is The Eclipse Of Man. Many do not need a painting to convey this, for they experience it daily. A middle age woman said, "I live alone and all day long I work at an IBM machine until I feel as if I could scream. I can't talk to a machine, and at night I can't talk to my TV set." Her life was dominated by the impersonal machine. For many there is more tragedy than humor in the story of the scientist who fed the question into the giant computer they had just completed-is there a God? The answer that came out was, "There is now."

In a world where machines dominate the Christian has a great obligation to believe, experience, and communicate the true nature of God as a Person, and as Father. No one can be an adequate Christian whose highest values are not personal rather than mechanical. We do not reject the mechanical, for God is Himself the creator of the most marvelous machine of all, which is the whole universe. The Christian is one, however, who recognizes person-hood to be the supreme value. The highest title or name of God is not king, master, or creator, but Father. Wordsworth said, "Father! To God Himself we cannot give a holier name." F. Faber wrote,

**Father! The sweetest dearest name,
That men or angels know!
Fountain of life, that had no fount
From which itself could flow.**

John Watson wrote, “With Jesus God and Father were identical. Fatherhood was not a side of Deity, it was the center. God might be King and Judge; He was first of all and last of all, and through all, Father.” The very first word we have recorded of Jesus was when He was 12 and His parents found Him in the temple. He said He must be about His Father’s business. The last words of Jesus before He died were, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” From beginning to end of His earthly life, and eternally, God is, was, and ever shall be to Jesus-the Father. But this is not just because He is uniquely the Son of God. This is so, and Jesus revealed God as Father because God is this to all men potentially, and to all in Christ actually. To as many as received Him John said, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God.

This is why Jesus emphasized the Fatherhood of God all through His life. This concept of God has greater power than any other to give assurance and security in a materialistic, impersonal world. Jesus says that when we pray we should say our Father who art in heaven. Fatherhood is the basis for prayer, and the basis for all true understanding of God and His will. To address God as our Father in heaven implies two things about God which are extremely important to know and feel to have an abundant Christian life. The first thing it indicates is-

GOD IS INTIMATE.

The philosopher would rather talk of a transcendent God, and the Totally Other. They feel this is a more mature way of thinking about God. But this ignores both the words and practice of Jesus who said we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of God, and who addressed God as Father 170 times. God is the great God of creation, and a God of transcendent glory. He is King of Kings and sovereign, but when it comes to His personal interest and care for us, He is Father.

Paul says in Gal. 4:6 in the Berkeley Version, “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, calling out, Abba! Father!” When a Christian is in right relationship with God and yielded to His Spirit, He will call God Abba. Abba is the Aramaic word that children use to refer to their father. It is equivalent to our English word daddy. This is the kind of intimacy we are to have with God when we fully realize the significance of His Fatherhood and our sonship.

This seems childish to the proud, but the humble Christian sees it as the fullest maturity, for we do not begin to know God as we ought until we trust Him as a little child does His father. When a child goes through the dark unafraid because he holds his father’s hand, that is not childish. That is childlike, and to be childlike is what is required for Christian maturity. The child is not impersonal and mechanical. His life is intimately involved in, and related to persons. Our lives will be more personal also if we learn to say our father, and learn to live with the full assurance of God’s intimate concern for us

as individuals.

Earthly fathers are often rightly charged with child neglect, and they often fail to be intimate with their children. They are too busy providing the material and impersonal things of life to have time for the personal concerns. But God forbid that we think that He too is caught up in this devotion to materialism. There is only one answer to the cry of the lonely heart which says, in the words of Ralph Cushman,

Can God see me?
When mighty universes glare
And flaming suns demand His care?
Among such giant, can it be-
So small a thing am I-canst thou see me?

Can God find me?
Among the teeming throng,
The myriad millions, dare I long
For Him, or dream that He could give
My outstretched hand the grasp for which I live?

Can God hear me?
When angels raise their songs on high,
And kings in adoration lift their cry,
Down in my humble alley of life
Is there a God who hears amidst the strive?

The answer is yes! In Christ it is yes, yes, yes. God can and does see, and He hears me. That is why I pray, "Our Father." God is intimate, and He cares for individuals. In the Old Testament God was more of a collective God. He was the father of Israel as a whole, but with the coming of Christ God became the God and Father of individuals. Jesus could say to Mary, "I ascend to my God and your God, to my Father and to your Father." Every believer can claim Jesus as brother and God as Father. Augustine said, "He loves us every one as though there were but one of us to love." We can never be all that we ought to be until we are fully convinced and assured that God is this intimate, and is our Father in heaven. This leads to the second point we want to consider.

GOD IS ADEQUATE.

Our Father in heaven distinguishes God from our earthly father. He does not have all the limitations of an earthly father. He is the eternal and perfect Father. All fatherhood has its origin in Him, but all fatherhood but His has been corrupted, and it has fallen, and is a poor reflection of His fatherhood.

Unfortunately this has been a hindrance to man's grasping the significance, beauty, and adequacy of God's fatherhood. Fatherhood is the first and supreme relationship in the universe, for it is eternal in the very nature of God. In Matt. 12:50 Jesus said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and

sister, and mother.” Note that he did not say the adult man who did so would be his father. He had only one father and that was God. We can be brothers, sisters and mothers to Christ, for all of these relationships are temporal, but the father relationship is eternal, and there can be no other but God. He gained mothers, brothers, and sisters, but He had His Father eternally.

Our Father in heaven is alone able to fulfill the duties of fatherhood adequately. Earthly fatherhood, however, is derived from God’s fatherhood, and it was meant to be a reflection of His fatherhood. Man, however, has a tendency to depreciate fatherhood and exalt some other relationship such as brotherhood or motherhood. There are books and poems galore exalting mother to the pinnacle of perfection, and though they are not undeserving of much praise, it is way beyond the proportion due than when you consider how little is written concerning fathers.

The pagans exalted their mother goddesses and worship them with great devotion. The Catholic church followed this tendency to exalt the female over the male as an object of worship, and Mary rose to a place superior to that of Christ in practice, if not in word. Fatherhood just does not have the value the Bible gives to it, and the result is we lose an adequate concept of God. Even those who exalt fatherhood end up putting it in a secondary position. For example, Judge Micheal Musmanno said in a decision which ruled that a 6 year old daughter was to be returned to her father for permanent custody: “Poetry, sculpture, music and oratory have permeated the world with sublime fragrance and the divine chant of mother’s love, unequaled as it is in beauty and devotion. But a father’s love, though not so celebrated in song and oratory, in verse and in statuary, is of an intensity and amplitude that in the trinity of the ultimate in adoration and worship, the only two that surpass it are the love of God and the love of mother.”

What is missing here is the recognition that the love of God which is put first is none other than a father’s love. Father love is the most adequate of all love, for it is the love of our Father in heaven. He alone is adequate as a Father. Nevertheless, as fathers on earth we have a great obligation to God and our children to be images of, and channels of the love of our heavenly Father. In fact, all of God’s children are responsible for exalting the concept of fatherhood in general, for if we neglect it, or degrade it, we degrade the primary concept by which people can know God.

A father who is not a good father and a loving father will make it more difficult for his children to know God as Father. Whereas the good father will aid a child in coming to a full realization of the blessing in being able to address God as Father. In other words, fatherhood can be a means of evangelism, and it can lead our children to God. Every father needs to be fully assured of his own commitment to Christ. Jesus said that no man comes to the Father but by Him, and so every child needs to be committed to Christ, for then, in spite of the failures of earthly fathers, they can pray with assurance, “Our Father who art in heaven.”

3. DESIRE DETERMINES DESTINY Based on Matt. 6:7-15

People succeed for a thousand different reasons, but the one thing they all have in common is desire. Igor Sikorsky, the great Russian airplane designer, tells in his autobiography of how his father took him to Paris as a boy, and they visited an airport where he saw his first plane. His imagination was stimulated, and he developed a burning desire to build a machine that would fly. He begged his father to let him leave school and work on it. At 17 he began, and after two years he had spent nearly all of his father's money, and his plane never got off the ground. His sister still had faith in him, so she gave him all she could afford. After two more years he got his plane off the ground, but plunged it into a local lake, and barely escaped with his life. The family still believed in him, so they mortgaged their property to enable him to build another plane. He did it, and then went on from this success to build the first successful multi-motored plane. Finally, he designed and built the famous China Clipper, which he flew around the world.

His success began with his burning desire, and it was his desire that pushed him on through all these failures to achieve his goal. If failure stops a man from pressing on, you can count on it, he has lost his desire. As long as desire is burning, there is always fuel to keep it going, for desire determines destiny. This is true in every realm of life. Take marriage for example. If two people really desire to find a solution to their problems, they will work out a way. If they lose desire, however, they have little hope of success. Desire is the fire that pushes us higher.

On the locker room wall of the University of Notre Dame's football team is the well known saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Football games are not won in the first half when both teams are fresh. Victory comes in the second half when their bodies ache, and they only want the grueling punishment to end. That is when the team with the deepest desire digs to the depths of their being for that reserve energy to keep going. If there is no deep desire to win, it is all over. If it is there, however, there is no telling what kind of spectacular plays will be made. Deep burning desire drives a team to do in a few minutes what they could not do in hours.

The greater the desire to reach a goal, the more likely it is, that goal will be reached. Longfellow said in his teens, "I most eagerly aspire after future eminence...My whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centers in it." Do you think there is any connection between his burning desire and the fact that most of us recognize the name Longfellow when we hear it? There is a very definite connection. Right after World War II, a young preacher who liked to paint had a showing of 50 of his paintings in one of Boston's great art galleries. The critics were amazed, and declared he was a genius. He never even went to art school, but James Greer was one of the great landscape artists of our nation. William Stidger, one of his seminary professors, had him install one of his paintings in his house. He asked him how he came to be a painter, and he replied, "I always wanted to paint more than I wanted to do anything else in life..." This is the key to almost every success story you will ever hear. You tend to become what you really desire to be.

If this be the case, there are few things in life that are more important than that of developing the desires that will dominate, direct, and determine the direction and destination of your life. That is why the Lord's Prayer deals with desires. The six

petitions of this prayer represent the six basic desires that are to characterize the child of God. When these six desires dominate your life, and become the inner driving force of your life, you are as successful as any human being can be. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire. Here in this prayer of our Lord, we have the very essence of prayer and desire linked together as one.

This prayer was taught to the disciples because they came to Jesus asking Him to be taught how to pray. This prayer comes in response to their desire to know how to pray more effectively. It is, therefore, an answer to prayer, or their soul's sincere desire. Desire is the cause of it as well as the content of it. It is a prayer which, in itself, is an answer to prayer, and the key to all answered prayer. The key, of course, is divinely directed desires. Fenelon, in the 17th century, said, "To pray is to desire...to desire is to pray, and sense, if we desire improper things, we may be cursed with the granting of our prayer, it behooves us to desire only high and worthy things."

What he is saying is, strong desire almost always leads to the getting of what is desired. That means if you desire the wrong thing, you will probably succeed in getting it, and so your very success becomes a curse. Bernard Shaw in, *Man And Superman*, was right when he said, "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your hearts desire. The other is to get it." In other words, sometimes the worse thing that can happen is to get what we most want. The Prodigal wanted his inheritance right now, and he got it, and ended up with the pigs with nothing to show for it. Midas got the golden touch he so much desired, and ended up destroying the daughter he so much loved. The Israelites got their quail they begged for. God granted them their deepest desire, but it became a curse, and many of them died, giving credence to Oscar Wilde's statement, "When the gods wished to punish us, they answer our prayers."

This means that the goal of prayer is not answered prayer, but divine desire. The highest goal of prayer is not to get what we want, but to come to want what God wants us to have. We see this so clearly in Christ's prayer battle in Gethsemane. He had a strong desire to escape the cup that awaited Him. He had the normal human desire to live and not die, plus the pure and holy repulsion from taking on the sin of the world. Both His human and divine nature had a desire to let that cup pass unconsumed. The goal of His prayer, however, was not to get that sincere desire fulfilled, but to get His desire conformed to the will of God. He was able to win this victory, and let His Fathers desire dominate His own. That is why He could pray, not my will but Thine be done. Desire determines destiny, and because Jesus was able to wrestle His desires into a proper order where God's desires took priority over His own, He became the Savior of the world. The destiny of all mankind hung in the balance, as these conflicting desires struggled for priority.

Nobody knows better than Jesus that desire determines destiny, and that is why the prayer He taught all of the family of God is a prayer designed to determine desires. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian of the middle ages, called the Lord's Prayer, "A list of perfect desires." Newman Hall said, "As the 10 commandments are a summary of our doctrine, so the Lord's Prayer is a summary of what ought to be our desires." Bishop Gore said, "Understand the Lord's Prayer and you understand altogether how to

pray as a Christian should. It is not really an exaggeration to say that the climax of Christian growth is to have thoroughly learned to say the Lord's Prayer in the spirit of Him who first spoke it."

Oh, thus, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod,
Lord, teach us how to pray.

And Jesus answers that prayer by teaching us the desires that are to dominate us as we come before God in prayer. The Westminster Shorter catechism defines prayer like this-"Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will." That means the Lord's Prayer is the perfect prayer, for all of its desires are perfectly agreeable to God's will. If you truly desire what the petitions of this prayer ask, you cannot help but be successful in prayer.

But that is the catch: If you truly desire. The proof that this is hard work is that Jesus sweat drops of blood in bringing His desire into conformity with the Father's will. Don't kid yourself, and think we have here a simple success formula, and all you have to do is say the words, and like open sesame, the door of heaven will open in response. The idea of using this prayer like a magic formula is contrary to its very purpose. If you cannot bring yourself to truly desire what this prayer requests, the mere repeating of the words is vain repetition, and no prayer at all.

You can say this prayer a thousand times: Hallowed be Thy name, and then go out and use the name of God in vain as a curse word. It is meaningless words, and you just as well recite the multiplication table, for words without desire is not prayer. People confuse wishing with desiring. A wish may be the seed of a desire, but it has not yet germinated. You can hear a great piano player, and say, "I wish I could play like that." But that is the end of it. A desire to play like that moves you to action, and you take lessons, and you practice. True desire always motivates action to achieve what is desired. Anyone who truly desires what he asks God for is taking action that helps achieve the answer. The mere wisher is using prayer as a gimmick. He hopes God will just bring it to pass without him lifting a finger. The person who says I wish I knew the Bible better may pray, "Lord help me understand the Bible." He hopes it will happen by God imparting it to him supernaturally. The person who desires to know the Bible prays the same prayer, but he also reads the Bible, gets study aids, and devotes a part of his life to achieve the goal.

In this model prayer of only 52 words in the Greek New Testament, Jesus gives us the list of desires that always please God, and are desires that will always motivate us to actions that please God, and lead us to successful Christian living. Just as the ten commandments are divided into two tables, with duties to God, and duties to man, so the Lord's Prayer is divided into two sections. First there is three God-centered desires, and then three man-centered desires. This prayer helps us keep a balanced perspective. We are concerned about both the divine and the human. The divine has priority over the human, however, and is in keeping with Jesus's command to seek first the kingdom of

God.

The successful prayer life is one in which the dominate desires revolve around-

- 1. God's person-hallowed be Thy name.**
- 2. God's power-Thy kingdom come.**
- 3. God's purpose-Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.**

If man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, then that end should be reflected in those desires that bring us before God in prayer. Prayer gets distorted and abused when we forget God's priority, and begin to come to Him only as a resource of power to get our own will done. There are too many books on prayer that promote this idea of power in prayer from the perspective of how we can use God to get what we want. This tends toward developing dominate desires that are self-centered rather than God-centered. This leads man to that devilish role where we exalt ourselves above God, and strive to use Him as our servant. This can be innocent and cute when a child does it in ignorance. Like the little guy who prayed, "Remember when the snow was so deep there was no school. Could we have it again?" Or the little girl who prayed, "Dear God, I would like to be a teacher so I could boss people around." Adults are not so open and blunt about it, but they could still develop desires that are equally self-centered.

When God's person, power, and purpose, have the priority, selfishness is crowded out. The three Hebrew friends of Daniel illustrate what a burning desire to please God will do. They were to bow down to a golden image, or be thrown into a fiery furnace. They would have a normal desire to escape such a fate, but their desire to do the will of God took priority, and they responded-"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Their burning desire to be loyal to God was greater than their desire to escape, and the result was God honored their desire, and saved them from the fire.

You cannot lose when you put God first. I like the spirit of Mark Hatfield, a dedicated Christian senator, who takes this truth literally. He said, "I can't lose an election. My opponent may get more votes, but I will still win, because my commitment is to God's will. It's obvious to me that if my opponent gets more votes, God has some other place for me." That is the spirit of submission to the will of God that the Lord's Prayer requires. Without this spirit you can say the prayer, but you can't pray it, for to pray it is to desire what it asks.

The Lord's Prayer is an answer to the prayer, teach us to pray. Now we need to pray, Lord teach us to truly pray the prayer you have taught us to pray. In other words, help us to develop the desires that make it the real prayer of our lives.

**Teach me to suffer, strong and brave-
And mingle with my poor weak blood
A valorous spirit, quenchless fire!
In Thy blest Heart's redeeming Flood**

**My soul, dear Lord, in gentle mercy lave.
Refresh me with the nectar of Thy love,
Be Thou sole end and aim of my desire!**

Author Unknown

It is your desire that will determine your destiny in the plan of God. Even an atheist, like Bertrend Russell, recognized that desires are what determines what men will do. You can have duties, and moral principles, but they will not determine anything unless men desire to be dutiful and moral. Desire, he rightly says, is the spring of human action, and if you want to know what men will do, you must know their system of desires.

If a man desires his will be done regardless of God's will, then he is dangerous without measure, for then, like Hitler, he will violate any and every moral principle for the sake of his desire. On the other hand, if his desires conform to those of the Lord's Prayer, you can feel secure, for such a man will suffer personal loss, rather than violate the will of God. The person who desires are the desires of this prayer is not only the ideal politician, but the ideal person in every area of life. The more your desires match the desires of this prayer, the more you are like Christ. When you can really pray, not just say, but really pray this prayer, you have reached the pinnacle of spiritual success.

In the oldest commentary we have on the Lord's Prayer, going back to the African theologian Tertullian, who lived 160-230 A.D., we read him saying of this prayer that it embraces, "As it were the whole of the Lord's discourse, the whole record of His instruction; so that without exaggeration, there is comprise in the prayer and epitome of the entire Gospel." Here is the Gospel in a nutshell, and the more the family of God can truly pray this prayer, the more they will be the light of the world, and a channel for God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

It is obviously not enough to know the Lord's Prayer. Millions around the world pray it as a rote prayer. Most of us have prayed it in groups of people. It can have meaning this way, but usually we are more concerned about whether we should say debts or transgressions, than about the real desires of the prayer. The problem is, we think knowing it is enough, and so Christians are taught the Lord's Prayer, and everyone is content if it can be recited. This is folly, for knowing it is not desiring it. I can know there is a good book on prayer in the library, but it will not do me any good until I desire to read it, and learn how to pray better. Christian education has only gotten to the first base when it imparts knowledge. There will never be any runs scored until there is a desire to use that knowledge to achieve the end for which God gave it.

So when it comes to the Lord's Prayer, let us recognize, you can say it, say it, say it, and never really pray it, because you think it is a matter of words to utter. It is not. It is a guide for us to follow in developing desires, and getting our desires in the proper order so that we want in life what God wants us to want. This is the ultimate in success. Let us use this prayer as a desire developer, for desires determine destiny.

4. THE ETERNAL DESIRE Based on Matt. 6:7-15

Vice Presidents have names just as presidents, but they seldom become names we remember. George was vice president under president Polk, but only a whiz in trivial pursuit would ever remember his last name. He had a chance to become president of the United States, but he lost that chance because of a close vote in the Senate on a tariff bill. It was 27 to 27 and he had to break the deadlock. He could not win, for however he voted he would make half of the Senate his enemies, and that is what happened, and he did not get the nomination for president because of that vote. He retired and never held public office again. His name would have gone into obscurity except for a small Texas town. Texas had just joined the union, and they wanted to honor the vice president by naming their town after him. Because of this honor we all recognized the last name of that one time vice president, George Dallas.

We all like our name to be honored, for our name represents us. Alexander the Great had a soldier in his army who was also named Alexander, but he had a reputation of always being at a safe distance in the hour of battle. When the great Alexander heard of this, he commanded the soldier to be brought to him, and in anger he gave this order to him: "Either live up to you name, or get a new one." He wanted the name of Alexander to be honored. This is normal, and legitimate, to want a good name-a name you can wear proudly. Prov. 22:1 says, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

Nobody wants to get a bad name for themselves. The saying is true, "The person with a bad name is already half hanged." I have known people whose reputation was so bad they got blamed for all the wrong doing in their community. They were blamed whether guilty or not, because they had a bad name. We all know what Judas did to his name. He ruined it for all of history. Demas, by forsaking Paul for worldly gain, became synonymous with deserter. Benedict Arnold did the same in our American history. Once you get a rotten reputation it is almost as hard to regain honor for your name, as to get rotten meat fresh again. That is why we need to treat our name with respect. Edgar Guest expressed it in poetry:

You got it from your father,
'Twas the best he had to give.
And right gladly in bestowed it.
It's yours, the while you live.
You may lose the watch he gave
You, and another you may claim,
But remember, when you're
Tempted, to be careful of his name.
It was fair the day you got it,
And a worthy name to bear,
When he took it from his father,
There was no dishonor there.
Through the years he proudly
wore it, and to his father he was true,
And that name was clean and
spotless when he passed it on to you.

Oh, there's much that he has
given that he values not at all.
He has watched you break your
play things in the days when you were small.
You have lost the knife he gave
you and you've scattered many a game,
But you'll never hurt your father
if you're careful with his name.
Is your to wear forever,
Yours to wear the while you live,
Yours, perhaps, some distant
morning, another boy to give.
And you'll smile as did your
father-with a smile that all can share,
If a clean name and a good
name you are giving him to wear.

It seems perfectly logical that if there is a strong desire in the human family to maintain the honor of their name, how much more should this be the desire of the family of God? God, our heavenly Father, is not an abstraction, but He is a Person, and He also has a name. His name is important to Him, and He expects His family to respect and honor it. The reputation of God is often in the hands of His children, and He wants them to be aware of this great responsibility. The first desire we are to express in prayer, therefore, is the desire that His name would be hallowed, or honored, that is, respected. You can see how all of life, in word and walk, is going to be affected if our number one concern is the honoring of God's name.

This is number one in prayer, for the same reason God is to be number one in all things, for when He is in the right place, all the rest fall into order and make sense, for all else is based on the foundation of God's priority. The first commandment is to have no other gods before Him. The first commandment of Jesus is to love God with your whole being. The first day of the week is the Lord's day. The first born were to be dedicated to God. The first fruits were to be offered up to God. When you get first things first, the rest will all fit. But if you get this wrong, nothing will fit, and you have a lock with no key.

The key to successful prayer, and successful Christian living, is to desire above all else that God's name be honored. Charles Jefferson, the great preacher, said, "Unless this desire is uppermost in our heart we are not in the mood of prayer." The disciples asked the Lord to teach them how to pray, and Jesus said, here is how to do it, and after you have established the prayer attitude of being a part of the whole family of God, with our Father in heaven, then your first petition is to be a desire that has a two-fold application. It is to be a desire for a reverence for God within, and a desire for the reputation of God without.

I. THE REVERENCE FOR GOD WITHIN.

There is nothing that man can do to make God more of what He already is. He is as

holy, just, and righteous as He can be, and it is meaningless to pray that He will be more so. Our desire in prayer is that we might be more captivated by who and what God is, in order that we might more fully honor and glorify His name, by our reverence for Him. Augustine, back in the 4th century, wrote, "Can God be made holier than He is? Nay, but our own thought of what God is may be made holier by becoming more lofty and more true." Barclay wrote, "If we are to hallow God's name, we must see to it that our conception of God is truly Christian."

What we are requesting here is not any change in God, but a change in ourselves. We are desiring that we become, as God's children, more subjectively aware of who and what God is objectively. There is no more powerful life-changing desire you can have. It is the desire to know God as He really is, that we might honor and respect Him, and, therefore, really want His kingdom to come and His will to be done.

In Lincoln's Gettysburg address, he said, "We cannot hallow this ground, for it is already hallowed by those who here gave their lives." He was saying, that by there sacrifice those who died made that land special, or sacred. It was not just another piece of land, for it took on special meaning because of the price paid for it. It was, therefore, to be treated accordingly, and set aside as special, rather than common. This is what God expects us to do with His name. The Jews did this with the name Jehovah. It was the sacred name of God, and they did not speak it often. They used the name Lord as a substitute in order to keep Jehovah as a special and sacred name.

We have lost this idea of reverence for the name of God, and the result is, God's name is not very special, but is common. It is thrown around like Tom, Dick, and Harry. It is so common that it is nearly impossible to feel any reverence when people use His name. Entertainers frequently say, God bless you, or God be with you. Even a sneeze among the most ungodly can bring forth a God bless you. The name of God is more of a popular expression, like holy moses, than a representation of the Father in heaven.

The opposite of to hallow is to profane. To profane is to treat a name with indifference and disrespect. Using the name of God and His Son as a curse word is one of the popular ways of profaning the name. Nobody can really care about revering and honoring the name of God when they use it so flippantly. Swearing is supposedly a minor sin in our culture, but the fact is, a profaning of the name of God is a rejection of the key to the successful prayer life, and, thus, to the successful Christian life. Wherever swearing will get you, it will not get you into favor with God, which is the goal of the ideal life. Christians who swear hurt their own reverence for the Father, as well as His reputation among those who do not know Him as Father. The indiscriminate mouthing of the name of God also leads to loss of respect for the name. If people say "my God" for every surprise and shock, and "oh God" for every complaint, it is going to be hard to find any reverence for the name used so flippantly.

A man by the name of Terrill Clark Williams, in Fresno, California, actually went through the legal procedures to change his name to God. That is now his legal name, and you can look him up in the Fresno phone directory under God. This, and numerous such uses of the name of God, are the opposite of what this prayer is all about. Dr. Sutphin, in

his book, *Thine The Glory*, writes, "Have we not made the name of God a tool of small household utility? Have we not smudged it with the dust of everyday? And dragged it, face-flat, through the dust of mediocrity? Have we not set it down amidst the squalor of indifference?" The answer, of course, is yes we have. And the result is the name of God is not hallowed among us.

God is not a mere prayer answering machine that we learn how to operate by hitting the right keys. God is our heavenly Father, and He expects that we will relate to Him with respect. This is where prayer begins. It is in our attitude toward God, and in our desire to honor Him. Prayer begins with love for God and His name. The poet writes,

Dear Name! The Rock on which I build.
My Shield and Hiding Place.
My never-fading treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace.

Keep in mind, God's name and His being are one all through the Bible. To love and honor His name is to love and honor Him. David says in Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord." Peter says in Acts 2:21, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. The name of God is God. This means, to treat the name of God lightly is to have a superficial view of God. The more we take God's name seriously, the more we will realize our whole life is affected by this petition, hallowed be Thy name.

We cannot seriously pray this without recognizing that our lives often defile the purity of God's name. The more we see the implications of this desire, the more we will see that the rest of the Lord's Prayer is contained within this first petition. The desire for forgiveness, and the desire to be delivered from temptation, are the logical outgrowth of the desire for God's name to be honored, for it will certainly not be honored by our sin and folly. And so the wise poet prayed-

Thy name be hallowed! Help us Lord
to keep in purity Thy Word,
and lead, according to Thy name
a holy life untouched by blame.

Luther said we hallowed the name of God when our life and doctrine are truly Christian. So the more we truly honor God, and reverence His name within, the more we will be motivated to have an external life that is consistent with that inner reverence. This leads us to the second point.

II. THE REPUTATION OF GOD WITHOUT.

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Nature conveys to all men the message of God's majesty in power. But only moral agents, like men, can declare His holiness. God's reputation as a kind and loving and just God, who cares about man, depends upon His children. Our desire, when we come before God in prayer, is to be that our lives will enhance his reputation. Our desire is to

be that God's name will be loved and honored, because people see His love and compassion in us, and say, like father, like child.

The idea that Christians do not care what other people think, is folly. The Christian is to care deeply about what others think, for what they think of you will reflect on your God. You and I can tarnish the reputation of God, and cause people to lose respect for the Father. The Christian who is full of pride and prejudice may not have serious effects on the family, for the rest of the family can see these weaknesses as defects. They do not blame God for them. But the outsider will judge the parent by the child, and say, I want nothing to do with such a father, or such a family. In stead of people seeing your good works, and glorifying you Father in heaven, they see your bad works, and degrade your Father in heaven. God has condescended to let His reputation in the world rise or fall with a the conduct of His children.

This is a risky business, and has not always worked to God's advantage. Sometimes God is hated and despised, because His family does not care about His reputation. This was the tragedy of which Paul lamented in the book of Romans. The Jews, who were to be a blessing to the Gentiles, and show the light and love of God to them, turned the Gentiles off by their self-righteous snobbery, and violations of their own laws. Paul says in Rom. 2:24, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." One of God's biggest problems has been that of defending His reputation because of the conduct of His own family. As the Gentiles have blasphemed the name of God because of Jews, so the Jews have blasphemed the name of Christ because of Christians.

Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, often exalted as Godly rulers, were a greater curse to the kingdom of God than Hitler, for they did what he did in the name of God. They brought the Inquisition to Spain in 1480. Jews were forced to be baptized at birth, and this supposedly made them Christians. If at any time they showed a relapse, that is, ceased to be wholeheartedly Christian in doctrine and practice, they were declared heretics, and burned at the stake. Because the church and the state got to split all of a heretics property, the Jews were constantly being burned at the stake, and driven out of Spain. Modern Catholic scholars honestly recognize it was one of the most disgraceful chapters in church history, and they can understand why Jews despised the God, in whose name this great evil was done. This, and numerous other tragedies of history, could never have been done by Christians were came before God with a desire of the Lord's Prayer in their hearts-hallowed be Thy name.

If the reputation of God is a primary concern of the believer, he will be cautious to do nothing that makes others despised the name he bears and loves. History would have been different, and your life will be different, if you really pray this prayer, and deeply desire that your life will lift, rather than lower, the reputation of God. The question to ask is, is there anyone in the world who is more impressed with God, and who considers that maybe God does care, because of your life and caring?

The whole missionary spirit is wrapped up in this first petition. It is a prayer that people everywhere will come to love the Father in heaven, and desire to be a part of His family. This is the motive that makes missionaries. Some poet has written-

**I know of lands that are sunk in shame,
Of hearts that faint and tire,
But I know a Name, a Name, a Name
That can set those lands on fire.**

The difference between burning people at the stake, and setting their hearts on fire with love for Christ, is in this first, and primary, petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The Pharisees were only concerned about their own fame. All they did, they did for their own reputation. Jesus is saying this is the way to failure. True success comes when we desire God's fame, and not our own. If we can so live that God's name is honored, we have the only success that really matters. On the other hand, if we gain popularity, and make millions, but nobody loves God and admires Him more because of it, it is all folly, and a missing of the boat. Every child in the family of God has equal opportunity to be successful in a way that pleases God, and it all starts with this first desire.

This first petition demands that the child of God be concerned for all men. The "Our Father" still leaves out the unbeliever, for He is not a part of the family of God. But God is concerned that His name be honored by all, and be despised by none. We know that this is not possible, but it is still the goal of the Christian to want all to respect the name of God. In the book, God and Freud, the story is told of a Jew who was shipwrecked on a desert island. To keep from losing his mind he built himself a city. He gathered rocks and driftwood, and anything he could find. Several years later when rescuers came to the island, he insisted on showing them his city before he left. This is my house, he said, and over there is the temple, and down there is the grocery and the post office, and beyond that is the other temple. "The other temple," a rescuer asked. "Yes," he said, "That is the one I don't go to." The story is Jewish, but the reality is Christian as well. Christian competition has led many non-believers to lose respect for the name of God.

The question we need to keep asking ourselves is, what name are we most concerned about exalting and honoring? Is it the name of God, or the name of our denomination? Many groups have their values, but none are to have priority over the name of God. John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress, was a Baptist, but preferred to be called a Christian, or believer, and he wrote, "As for these...titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Jerusalem nor from Antioch, but rather from hell and Babylon, for they naturally tend to divisions." Bunyan was more concerned with the name of God than the names His children call themselves. So it was with Martin Luther who said, "I pray you,..leave my name alone, and do not call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine!....St. Paul would not that any should call themselves of Paul nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then does it befall me, who am but miserable dust and ashes, to give my name to the Children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions...away with them all! Let us call ourselves Christians...."

They did not listen, of course, and neither did the followers of others, and the result is hundreds of denominations that give God's children a name they can be tempted to exalt above the name of God. This has led to much division that has hurt the name of God and

Christ in our world.

This first petition is also the last. The desire to honor the name of God is the only eternal desire of the prayer. The rest are all limited to time. The kingdom will come, God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and that will be the end of the need to pray these petitions. Also, the need for daily bread, forgiveness, and escape from temptation will all end with eternity. But the need to revere the name of God will never end. When all the temporal desires are satisfied, this Eternal Desire will go on endlessly, and be the prayer of the believer forever-hallowed be Thy name.

5. THE KING AND THE KINGDOM Based on Matt. 6:7-15

For 13 years he was one of the greatest rulers Russia ever had. In 1547, when he took the throne, he sought for a Queen, and found one he loved so dearly that together they made their kingdom a kingdom of love. The king became a friend of the poor and suffering, and he built churches, and encouraged godliness. But then the fairy tale of living happily ever after came to an end. The Queen became ill and died. In his grief the king became a drunken sadistic beast. He began to abuse his power. He tortured people, and buried them alive. Freedoms were taken away, and the kingdom which was the best they ever had, was now the worst they ever had. The king, who for 13 years was called Ivan the Wonderful, was now called the name history remembers him by, Ivan the Terrible.

As the king goes, so goes the name of the king. When the kingdom is one of peace, joy, and justice, the ruler is respected, and his name is honored. When the kingdom is one of conflict, cruelty, and injustice, the name of the ruler is despised. The nature of the kingdom, and the name of the king are linked together as one, and they rise or fall as one. The king and the kingdom are one. That is why we see in the Lord's Prayer that the name of God and the kingdom of God are side by side, as desire number 1 and 2. It is first the king, and then the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is that realm over which God is king. This makes it a very unique and different kingdom from the kingdoms of men. The king of England ruled over England, and everyone in England was in the realm over which he ruled. The kingdoms of men are national and geographical. Not so the kingdom of God, for it is spiritual and universal. Part of the citizens of England are in the kingdom of God, and part of them are not. So it is for America, Europe, Africa, and the rest of the nations. None of the land of any of these nations is in the kingdom of God, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of land, but a matter of lives. People in all of these lands are submissive to God, and because God rules in their lives, they are part of the kingdom of God. All Christians have a dual citizenship, for they are citizens of their earthly kingdom, and of the kingdom of God.

This makes the kingdom of God very unlike all other kingdoms. It is fluid, and not static like other kingdoms. England has always been just where it is now, and so has France, Spain, and America. They are locked in kingdoms. Not so the kingdom of God,

for it is very fluid, and can come or go anywhere in the world, and become stronger or weaker depending on the subjects of the kingdom. During a revival, when people opened their hearts to the spirit of God, the kingdom can come in great power, and the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. God rule is evident in lives, and the society, for people obey the will of God as revealed in His Word.

On the other hand, when people neglect God's Word and forsake their loyalty to it, and become cold and indifferent to His guidance, the kingdom of God grows weaker. God's authority is undermined by some other authority, and the result is God's rule can even depart completely. North Africa is a good historical example. The kingdom of God thrived there in the early centuries of the Christian era, but for many centuries now, the kingdom of God has been weaker there than in almost anywhere in the world. So the point is, when we pray, Thy kingdom come, we really mean just that. May your rule come into our lives, our community, our nation, and our world, that we might be guided by your authority, and not lose the power and light it brings.

The first step in salvation is to respond to God's call-come. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The second step is to develop the desire to call unto God-come. Thy kingdom come. God wants us to come to Him, and then He wants us to want Him to come to us. Coming to Him is the experience of salvation. When we come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ, we enter the kingdom of God, that realm in which He reigns. But as we mature, and desire Him to come to us, that is the experience of sanctification. Step one is when you enter the kingdom, and step two is when the kingdom enters you. When a person receives Christ as Savior, they are immediately taken out of the kingdom of darkness, and taken into the kingdom of light. They are in kingdom of God, but not much of the kingdom of God is in them yet. The new Christian may be quite worldly and immature. Thy kingdom come is a prayer for change. It is a desire that you will not rule your own life, but that God would come and rule, and make your life a realm in which He reigns, and thereby, uses you to bring honor to His name.

The degree to which the kingdom comes in your life will be the degree to which you will hallow your heavenly Father's name. The degree to which you resist the coming of God's kingdom is the degree to which you will dishonor the name of God. This prayer sincerely desired is simply saying to God, I want to be a cooperative member of the family, and be a channel by which you can influence and change the world according to your will.

A person from another country can come into our land and live here, and be in our kingdom, so to speak. But as they fall in love with the freedoms and liberties of our land they develop a desire, not just to be in the kingdom, but to be a part of the kingdom, and get their citizenship. They were first in the kingdom, but then the kingdom got into them, and this in turn made them desire a more intimate relationship to the kingdom of America. This process is what the prayer, thy kingdom come, is all about. It is a prayer which involves a two-fold experience which I want to focus on. First of all, it is-

I. AN EXPERIENCE OF ENTHUSIASM.

Clovis Chappell, the great Methodist preacher, rightly said, "The kingdom of God was our Lord's supreme enthusiasm." Jesus practiced what He preached. He said we are to seek first the kingdom of God, and there can be no doubt this was the first priority of His own life. The very first message that Jesus proclaimed in public was, the kingdom of God is at hand. He proved God's kingdom, or God's rule, was present by defeating the power of evil. He cast out evil spirits, and He healed all manner of diseases. The kingdom of God was the kingdom of life, health, and joy, and it was good news to those who lived under the darkness of evil, sickness, and oppression.

All through His ministry the dominate theme of Jesus was the kingdom of God. Most of His parables were parables about the kingdom. When He sent His disciples out to preach, they were to preach the same message about the kingdom of God, and they were to demonstrate the truth of it by healing, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and driving out the demonic powers that ruled in their lives. The enthusiasm of the entire New Testament revolves around the kingdom of God. Even after Jesus rose from the dead, His primary theme was the same. Acts 1:3 says, "He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God." Jesus began and ended His ministry on earth with the message of the kingdom.

Paul's focus was also on the kingdom, and we read in the very last verse of the book of Acts, where we see that last glimpse of Paul, "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." These are only a few references to make the point, for the evidence is too great to consider in detail, for the kingdom of God is referred to 140 times in the Gospels and Epistles. There is no New Testament teaching that is not intertwined with the kingdom of God. The more you grasp this, the more you recognize the importance of being enthused about the kingdom, for it is the key to all that matters in God's plan for man.

As citizens of the kingdom of God, we give our highest allegiance to the King of this kingdom. The idea of my country right or wrong is anti-Christian, for if my country is wrong, it must be resisted, and brought into conformity with the kingdom of God. To chose to follow your country, even when it goes contrary to the rule of God, is idolatry. It is not seeking God's kingdom first, but second or third, and anything less than first is idolatry. I bring out this idea just to show you how dangerous this prayer is. If Christians really desire God's rule to come, and to drive out the rule of evil forces, it becomes the basis for that kind of enthusiasm that leads to civil disobedience, and even revolution.

Enthusiasm for the kingdom is what turned the world upside down in the early church, and it has been the driving force behind the great social movements of history that have put an end to so much injustice. Volumes are filled with the heroes and heroines of history, who have prayed, Thy kingdom come, and proved they really meant it, by being a channel of God's love that gave God an open door to enter lives and reign there.

I had heard so much about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but recently I read some of her writings, and discovered a marvelous Christlike woman. She loves the unlovely with a

love only Christ can supply. She reaches out to the unwanted, unloved, and abandoned, and she gives them help and dignity. She helps the hopeless die with dignity, and live, knowing they were loved after all. In Calcutta alone she had taken in 30,000 people off the street by 1975. Most of these she led to seek God's pardon, and His love. She helps lepers believe God loves them, and that their horrible malady is not due to His rejection of them.

She wrote of one old leper who was completely disfigured, who came to her and said, "Repeat that again; it does me good. I had always heard that no one loves us. It is wonderful to know God loves us. Say it again."

She discovered that the greatest hunger in the world is the hunger to be loved. The greatest disease and tragedy is to be unloved. She sees thousands die in peace just because they found out they are loved by God, and have proof of it in her ministry. You do not realize how hard it is to be Christlike until you read of one who is being Christlike. We tend to think of it as passive, but she shows us it is active. It is an invasion of the kingdom of darkness with light and love to lift the fallen and the crushed.

There have always been many who were enthused for the kingdom of God who sincerely thought they wanted God's will to reign, but who failed miserably, and brought disgrace to the name of God. Catholics and Protestants alike have tried to force the kingdom of God on others, and in so doing they wrote the darkest chapters of Christian history. Aldous Huxley in his novel, *Ape and Essence*, defined progress like this: "The theory that Utopia lies just ahead, and that ideal ends can justify the most abominable means, it is your privilege and duty to rob, swindle, torture, enslave, and murder, all of those who obstruct the onward march to earthly paradise."

Christians have, time and time again, become convinced that evil is legitimate for the cause of the kingdom, and they have disgraced the name Christian, and the name of our Lord, and of our heavenly Father. When Christians are evil and oppressive of others, it is not better than when non-Christians do it. It is worse, for they represent the kingdom of God. Someone said, "No rearrangement of bad eggs can make a good omelet." A Christian who denies me my rights and freedom is more evil than an atheist doing so, for the Christian is letting the kingdom of darkness use the resources of the kingdom of light. A traitor is more despicable than an enemy. We expect an enemy to be unjust, but we expect all in the family of God to be loving and good. The point I am making is, it is essential to have enthusiasm, but that alone is not enough.

This is why, hallowed be Thy name, is the first petition, and must have priority over the others. Nothing can be acceptable Christian behavior that brings dishonor to the name of God. If you by sheer force get people to conform to the kingdom, but they despise the king of the kingdom, the kingdom has not really come at all. You may form a legalistic culture as many have, where the laws of God are enforced on unwilling subjects. This is a slave culture, and not the kingdom of God. Where God truly reigns, the people chose to obey Him, for they love Him, and enjoy the liberty His law gives. Our enthusiasm for the kingdom must always be guided by the higher desire to honor the name of God. The history of Christian cruelty is the history of taking this second petition as number one, and excluding the first. This is forgetting that the kingdom only truly

comes where the name of God is honored. This prayer is a desire that leads, not only to an experience of enthusiasm, but also to-

II. AN EXPERIENCE OF EXPECTATION.

If you want anything to come, the implication is that it is not yet here, and so this desire, by its very nature, looks to the future. We must live in expectation of its fulfillment. This expectation includes the immediate and the infinite future, as well as everything in between. It is a mistake to limit the coming of God's kingdom to anyone manifestation of it. Those who look only to the end of history miss the value of this prayer for the daily process of history. One of the strongest objections humanists have of Christianity is that it has often ignored human misery, and focused on future glory. This has often been true, but not because it was the way of Christ, or God's will.

The true desire for God to rule is not just a desire for someday, but for today. We are to desire it now, just as we desire daily bread. This is not a prayer Christians have prayed for nearly 2,000 years without an answer. It is answered daily in millions of lives. Therefore, it is a mistake to focus only on the ultimate expectation of the coming of the kingdom. If this is a prayer for the coming of the final kingdom only, then it is the most unanswered prayer in history. Multiplied millions have prayed it over and over through the centuries. If it has only one answer at the end of history, it is not very effective nor efficient, and it would then be more like the vain repetition that Jesus condemned in prayer.

Unfortunately, both Protestants and Catholics have seen this petition as a future focus only. Many Protestants see it as primarily relating to the millennial kingdom, where Christ will reign on earth. Maritain, the Catholic scholar, writes, "This petition, or this desire, relates first and above all to the future world, the world of eternity." My own conviction is that Jesus intended this prayer to be a practical guide for daily life. He expected God's name to be honored now in everyday life, and He expected the will of God to be done now; daily, in the life of the believer. We need daily bread, daily forgiveness, and daily deliverance from temptation. Why should we take all the desires of this prayer for man and make them current events, and then take the three first desires concerning God's person, power, and purpose, and treat them as relating to the distant future? This is both foolish and dangerous, for it is saying, God is not relevant for the now.

I think Jesus had just the opposite idea in mind. He expected the Christian who prays this prayer, with a desire for the kingdom to come, would expect it now, and not someday. The desire is for God's will to reign in the present. The ultimate reign of God is inevitable, and will come whether we pray or not. God's will will be done finally, but the real issue is, will it be done today, and will it be done by us? Will God's rule be effective in the decisions we make right now? For the millions who pray this prayer, that should be the primary question, and, therefore, the primary expectation should be for the kingdom to come, not just someday, but today.

Helmut Thielicke, the great German preacher, who kept preaching the Gospel even under Hitler, tells of a day of great discouragement. His church had been bombed, and

was a heap of rubble and ashes. His people were scattered to the four winds. He stared into the concrete pit where 50 people had been killed. He was depressed as he was absorbed in the gloomy thoughts of it all. A woman came up and asked if he was the pastor, and when he said yes, she said, "My husband died down there...the cleanup squad was unable to find a trace of him....We were there the last time you preached in the Cathedral church. And here before this pit I want to thank you for preparing him for eternity."

Thielicke said the kingdom had come, even into that depressing environment. He had not been expecting it, but the point is, he should have, and all of us ought to always expect the kingdom of God to come. That is what we pray for, and that is what we should be always expecting, whatever the situation. Our desire is not just that God will ultimately reign, but that He will reign now, and over rule the power of evil, and bring forth good for time, as well as eternity.

We are praying, come and so reign in my life that whatever the circumstance, I can be used to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem. This is the prayer, not just of the eternal optimist, but of the present optimist who expects God to win even now. Augustine was right when he said, "It is the grace of living the right way that you ask for when you pray, Thy kingdom come." The whole idea of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, is that of being a channel by which the kingdom of God can come into this world now. This petition is to be an experience of enthusiasm and expectation that will make us a tool God can use to make more real to us, and the world, the king and the kingdom.

6. THE TRINITY OF DESIRES Based on Matt. 6:7-15

There is only one of the 50 states that is named after a man, and that is the state of Washington. It was originally named after King George III of England, and called New Georgia. When America acquired it from Britain, they called it Columbia, and later changed it to Washington in honor of the first President. This same piece of land bore the name of two great enemy leaders of the American Revolution: George III of England, and George Washington of the Colonies. It bears the name Washington now, however, because he was the George that got the job done, and he won. His name is honored in our land because he was victorious.

Some names are honored in more than one land. One of the most fascinating cases is that of the great Russian Admiral, Ivan Pavel. In 1788 Catherine the Great sent him to lead the Russian fleet against the Turks in the Black Sea, and Ivan won a stunning victory. He won many other battles at sea as well. But you say, so what, we never heard of the guy. That is because, as Paul Aurandt points out in his book *Destiny*, the name sounds different in Russian. Ivan in English is John, and Pavel is Paul. This great Russian hero is none other than the great American hero, John Paul Jones. This same man, because of the persuasion of Thomas Jefferson, made a name for himself in both

the nations which became the super powers of the 20th century.

There are many who have made names that are honored in many lands, and some who are almost universally honored. This is the ultimate objective of the plan of God for this earth, that his name be universally honored. This is where prayer begins, says Jesus. This is the unifying principle that makes Christians all over the world, one. They might disagree on many things, but one thing all must hold in absolute unity is that God's name is to be honored universally. When you care enough to pray the very best, you pray, hallowed be thy name. Where ever the name of God is honored, people are open to God's rule, and there His kingdom will come. And where His kingdom comes, His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer are very much like the three Persons of the Godhead in that they are one. Any one of them includes the other two. You cannot honor His name without His kingdom coming and His will being done. You cannot see His kingdom come, and not honor His name, and do His will. You cannot do His will, and not honor His name, and see His kingdom come.

In Luke 11, Dr. Luke records another occasion when Jesus taught this same prayer, and there He says only the first two, and the third petition is missing. It is there by implication, however, for it is the logical result of God's kingdom coming. If He rules and reigns in your life, then His will will be your supreme guide, and you will do it. The fact that Jesus did not legalistically always say all three is evidence that He did not intend this prayer to be a magic formula. It cannot please God by merely being repeated over and over. It is not a form, but a guide by which we bring all of our desires into conformity with the purpose of God.

Here in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us the balance of three God-centered desires, and three man-centered desires. Three represents the nature of God, who is triune, and it is fascinating how the three runs through all Scripture, and nature. God's Word and His world take on the nature of their Creator. All of nature is categorized as animal, mineral, or vegetable. It can also be, earth, water, and air. It is also, solid, liquid, and gas. There are hundreds of uses of three in the Bible. We cannot begin to look at them, but just note a few examples that have influenced all of history. The three friends of Job, the three wise men, with their three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah joined Jesus, making a three person conference, and Peter wanted to build three tabernacles to commemorate it. Jesus said destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up, and as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so will I be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

I share just these few well known references in order to establish how important threes are in the Bible. It has influenced all of literature. Take children stories in our own culture, for example. You have the three bears, the three little kittens, the three blind mice, the three little pigs, the three billy goats gruff, and the three little fishes. So many of the stories of history are about the kings three sons or three daughters, or the three musketeers. So many of the jokes you hear are of three men, or the Catholic, the

Protestant, and the Jew. There is something about threes that give balance. So many of the popular sayings are three word sayings.

**Blood, sweat, and tears.
Three cheers for the red, white, and blue.
Tom, Dick, and Harry.
Morning, noon, and night.
Tall, dark, and handsome.
Love, honor, and cherish.
Healthy, wealthy, and wise.
Faith, hope, and love.**

A thorough study would produce many more examples. Three point sermons are not just the whim of pastors. The idea of three points to any message is based on the nature of God, reality, and the human need for balance. In three there is unity, strength, and completeness. Mary Davis wrote,

**Three men, together riding,
Can win new worlds at their will;
Resolute, ne'er dividing,
Lead, and be victors still.
Three can laugh and doom a king.
Three can make the planet sing.**

And I can add a line: Three can cover everything that God wants us to desire for Him. When we get the first three desires of the Lord's Prayer dominating our lives, we have reached the heights of success in Christian living. We want to focus on the third desire of this triumphant trinity of desires. There are some powerful implications involved in praying thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. First of all:

I. IT IMPLIES A GREAT NEGATIVE.

If we need to pray constantly that God's will be done on earth, it is quit evident that God's will is not done on earth much of the time. Everybody knows this is so, for it is self evident, even to the blind. Yet, many Christians refuse to face up to this reality, and try to promote the cruel idea that everything is the will of God. There is no way to measure the damage Christians have done with this perverted idea of the sovereignty of God, by which they mean, He is the cause of every terrible thing that happens in history.

If everything is the will of God, then there is no more meaningless prayer than one that asks that it be done. We might just as well ask that the world be round, that the stars be up, that birds be able to fly. Why not pray for the sun to be hot, and that fire would burn, and that gravity would hold us down? Jesus is not toying with us here, and playing theological tricks. He is teaching us the most important desires we can develop to be successful Christians, and one of them is the desire for God's will to be done. There is no way you can honestly develop such a desire if God's will is already always done. Therefore, any teaching that says all is the will of God, is a direct contradiction of Jesus.

The whole point of prayer is to cooperate with God in moving toward ideals. The reason we are to pray that God's name be honored is because it is everywhere dishonored. The reason we are to pray that His kingdom come is because God's rule and authority are rebelled against everywhere. The reason we are to pray that His will be done is because it is everywhere just not being done. These are the three great potentials of history, but right now they are not great realities. Being aware of this is the only protection we have against the wiles of the devil. Christians who believe everything is the will of God are open game for every religious con artist, and cult leader, that comes along.

The world is so full of people who claim to know the will of God for everything, and everybody, that it takes a sucker being born every minute just to keep them all in business. The tragedy is not only the deception, but the dishonor it brings to the name of God among people who are thinkers. The man who founded the church of Satan in America, did so because of believers who dishonored the name of God. He was a reporter, who was often at the scene of accidents. After seeing children crushed and broken, and smashed to pieces, and then hearing, time and time again, Christians saying it was the will of God, he came to hate the God of Christians. That is why he formed a religion of Satanism to mock the Christians God. He will be judged, but the Christians who spouted such false theology, will also be held accountable.

If you study the history of communism and atheistic humanism, you will discover that one of the major reasons for their existence is the failure of Christians to honor the name of God by doing His will. Instead, they excepted the rotten state of the world, as it was, as the will of God. The result was many anti-Christian movements. One of the most important things you can do for this fallen world is to acknowledge the truth that God's will is not done on earth as it is in heaven. That is why heaven is heaven, and earth is that place where so many are convinced is the only hell there is. Until we are willing to admit it is a hell-hole for many, and that this is not God's will, we will never take this prayer seriously, and never develop the desires that motive us to make a difference.

The Christians who have made a difference in history are those who, with deep conviction, have said of some evil, this is not the will of God, and by God's grace and power, I will help the world be rid of it. The idea of accepting everything, as if it is the will of gods, is a pagan idea. Christians have had to fight this idea all over the planet to save people from man made evil and tragedy. The Christian view is that no preventable evil and suffering is the will of God. If disease, starvation, and every evil you can imagine, can be prevented, then God is on the side of those who fight for its prevention. Before any such preventable evil, it is not Christian submission, but pagan fatalism to say, "Let me be still and murmur not, but breathe the prayer divinely taught, thy will be done." It is Christians who have so surrendered to evil who have brought darkness to the name of God. Those who destroy the kingdom of evil do the will of God, and bring honor to His name.

When man is not dominated by the desire to do the will of God, he will do his own will instead. This goes for the Christian, as well as everyone else. This is the primary cause for conflict, and the break down of unity in the family of God. Wyn Sutphin, the pastor

of a great Presbyterian church, gives this example of how even pastors can fall into the trap of trying to use God to achieve their own will. He writes, "I remember that one minister once went so far as to engage a plane to circle Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. This was in the Dodger Days, and from that soaring pulpit he announced that he would make the prayers that would ensure the Dodgers victory! I have no sympathy with that, for, in the first place, its plain blasphemy, and in the second, I was rooting for the Yankees! Ah, you see! Instead of studying to know the will of God, most men prefer to deify their own."

History makes this clear, and you need look no further than your own heart to know that God's will is often resisted, rejected, replaced, or redesigned to fit our will. The only way you can ever really make this a real desire, and true prayer, is by acknowledging the reality of the great negative, which is, God's will is often not done. But now let's look at the positive.

II. IT IMPLIES A GREAT NOBILITY.

The proof that you cannot exalt God without lifting man is right here in this prayer. These first three petitions are God-centered, to be sure. It is God's name that is to be honored; God's kingdom that is to come, and God's will that is to be done. But let me ask you, who is it who will honor the name of God? To whom will the kingdom of God come? Who will do the will of God on earth? The answer to all three is man.

This is not a prayer for the Cherubim and the Seraphim, and other angelic beings. They already honor God day and night, and they dwell in the fullness of His kingdom, and they do His will perfectly in heaven. They are the ideal fulfillment of this prayer. For them it is answered. Where it needs to be prayed and obeyed, is here on earth, where man is the pray-er and obey-er.

Man is lifted by this prayer to the nobility of being a child of the King, but it goes beyond this to make man a partner with God. There are a lot of children who are parts of families, but who are not partners with the parents. Pastors have children with no interest in the ministry. Politicians have children who have no interest in politics. Business people have children who take no interest in their business. They are in the family, but they are not partners. It is the same in the family of God, but it is not God's will. The heavenly Father expects every child to be a partner in His plan for man. In fact, He depends upon us to the point that if we do not become active partners, His will does not get done. Here is the basis for the dignity and nobility of every child of God.

God gives His children a great deal of responsibility. We need to recognize that God puts His trust in us, and He expects us to do His will on earth. He has a high respect for what His children can do in this world. If He wants us to desire these things deeply, and make them the primary prayers of our lives, He believes in us. He believes that we can bring honor to His name; that we can be channels of His power and rule in the world, and that we can do His will on earth, just like the unfallen angels of heaven. To pray this prayer, believing that you can be God's partner in getting His will done, is to have the kind of self-image that is the key to success in any realm of life.

Victor Serebriakoff was told, as a 15 year old, that he was not capable of being a student. He should drop out of school and learn a trade. He believed what he was told, and acted on that belief, and for 17 years went from one job to another. When he was 32 years old, he discovered, by an IQ test, that he was a genius. He had an IQ of 161. He believe what he was told, and instead of being a dunce, he started living like a genius. He wrote books, and became a successful business man. The Scripture says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." We become what we think we are, or in other words, what we think we are, we are.

The Lord's Prayer can change our whole life just by what it can do for our self-image. If we really believe that we are partners with God in getting this world to be a place where God's will is done, it will raise our level of self-esteem, and spur us on to be what we can be. What is your value, and what is your worth? You are a channel for doing God's will on earth. The problem is, the average Christian undermines his own self-worth, and the nobility of his place in God's plan. There are so many outstanding Christians in this world, who make headlines, and who become well known. It seems unlikely for most to achieve this sort of fame, and so they tend to minimize their role in doing the will of God. This kind of thinking is eliminated by the one who really prays this prayer-thy will be done on earth. This is not an aristocratic prayer, designed for the few elite at the top. Is a family prayer for all the children of God, in every place, and at every time. Every child of God has the capability of doing God's will just as completely as any other.

I have books in my library I seldom use, for they are reference works that I only need to consult once in awhile. They are less valuable to me than books I use constantly. In fact, there are some books I use frequently that are of far less value than those I seldom use. Books have different functions, and they are not all alike, but each meets a need. Each becomes a partner with me in accomplishing my will. The same is true of a mechanic and his tools. Some he uses everyday, but others only occasionally, but that one he uses rarely is a vital part of his equipment. If he lacked it he could not accomplish his purpose as a mechanic. The point is, Christians are all different, and each has different gifts, but every child of God is a partner with God in getting his will done. Everyone of us is so unique, we may be the only one who can do the specific will of God, in our environment, at any particular time.

This not only gives us a nobility, but it ought to help us see why we ought to respect the self-worth, and potential, of others. Bill Morcy was a problem child, and as a teen-ager was listed as hopelessly bad. His school could not find a teacher who would take the class he was in. Finally, they found one who had the patience to work with the hopeless. Morcy slowly dropped his bad habits, and took an interest in his studies, because of this teachers concern. He went on to become a associate justice of the Supreme Court. Then he became a United States Senator, and then Governor of New York, and finally, Secretary of State. William L. Morcy served faithfully in all these great posts, and was a success because of one teacher who believed that God's will could be done through any person who would respond to love and encouragement.

This prayer is the backbone of Christians success, for it is the foundation for our

confidence that God's will can be done, and it can be done by me. This is the needed balance in a world where so much is not the will of God. There is a need for a noble body of people who counteract this great negative, and provide the world with a great positive: A realm in which God reigns, and where the world can see the value and blessings of His will being done on earth. This prayer is only truly prayed by one who, with a true sense of partnership with God, believes he or she can be a tool to offset the great negative reality, and be a part of the answer, rather than part of the problem. It is a prayer like that of John Hay who wrote,

Not in dumb resignation,
We lift our hands on high.
Not like the nerveless fatalist
Content to twist and die.
Our faith springs like the eagle,
Who soars to meet the sun,
And cries exalting unto thee,
Oh Lord, thy will be done.

When this is truly our prayer, the kingdom will come, God's name will be honored, and His will will be done on earth, and it will be done through us who have this trinity of desires.

7. THE DEBT DISSOLVING DESIRE Based on Matt. 6:7-15

About one hundred and sixty five years ago, in Jan. of 1835, the United States of America became the only major nation in modern history to do a certain thing. It was a thing she would love to be able to do again, for she paid off her national debt. It was done by the sale of public lands in the West. Unfortunately, that was a one time solution, and that was the only year our nation had no debt. Today the national debt is a major problem. Personal debt is also a major social issue. Studies have shown that the heavy burden of debt is a primary cause for depression, alcoholism, marital conflict and divorce, and all of the other negative effects of these problems.

Even for those who are wise, and do not get in over their heads, there is still the constant pressure of debt. We can all identify with the poet who wrote,

Tomorrow never comes, they say,
But all such talk is idle gush,
For when we have a debt to pay,
Tomorrow gets here with a rush.

Dead is not all bad, for most of us would be riding horseback to our caves, instead of riding in cars to our homes, if it were not for the possibility of debt. Debt has its good side, and even its bad side has caused a lot of good. People hate it so much that it motivates them to work hard to avoid it. Horace Greeley hated debt, and he said, "I would rather be a convict in a state prison, a slave in a rice swamp, than to pass through

life under the horror of debt." He so hated it that it drove him to work hard and become a very successful editor of the New York Tribune.

Sr. Walter Scott wrote most of his great novels in order to wipe out a terrible debt. Mark Twain lectured all over the world to pay off a huge debt he had acquired. Howard Ruff, one of the leading financial advisers in America, was once in debt for half a million dollars. His father took his own life because of being in debt, but Howard went from bankruptcy to wealth and fame. He paid off every cent of his debt. He hated it so much he was driven to defeat it, and not be defeated by it. Debt can be a powerful motivator, and it does not always have to be hated. Paul was motivated to become a great preacher and church planter because of a great debt he owed. He wrote in Rom. 1:14, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to the Jews, both to the wise and the foolish." He was debt driven disciple. He owed everything to the grace of Christ, who saved him, and the least he could do was to devote his life to sharing the good news with a lost world.

Debts can have a good side in the life of a pagan. Dr. Walter Judd, as a young missionary doctor in China, had to choose to treat kindly, or coolly, a very cruel and wicked chief of bandits. Lu Hsin-Ming led men who looted and killed with no respect for life. He became ill, and when the Chinese medicine did not help, he was brought to the hospital. Dr. Judd treated him with kindness, and after a few days he recovered. Some months later word came that the Nationalist Army was on its way to drive out the bandits. Everyone knew this meant terror for the city, for the bandits would rob, rape, and destroy, before they fled. Instead, the chief came to Dr. Judd and thanked him. He even paid the \$170.00 hospital bill, and marched off without violence. He had planned to take Dr. Judd as a hostage, but his kindness in treating him changed his mind. He was a cut-throat pagan, but he felt the power of an honest debt, and his indebtedness motivated him to be kind in return.

Debt is not all bad. Paul even says in Rom. 13:8, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." The debt of love we owe to all, and this is a good debt, for it motivates us to be more Christlike. Someone even found a good side to the national debt. It is almost a certain guarantee that future generations of Americans will never become ancestor worshipers. This is what you call making the best of a bad situation. But the fact is, there is an optimistic side to debts. The pessimistic side is due to the fact that debts can become so excessive that they depress, defeat, and destroy. Debts can be deadly, and that is the kind of debts that Jesus is dealing with in this prayer.

They are debts we owe to God. Sins are debts, because when we sin we fail to give to God what we owe Him. He is the giver of life, and the giver of all the laws of life. Man has an obligation to obey those laws. Adam and Eve had an obligation to do what God commanded. When they did not do it, they fell, and that fall into sin was a fall into debt. They owed God what they did not pay, and when you owe what you can't pay, you are in debt. Notice, I said, when you owe what you can't pay. If you can pay what you owe, you are not seriously in debt. It is when you can't pay what you owe that you are seriously in debt. That is what sin is-unrepayable debt.

You owe God 100% obedience. So if you failed only once, for a few moments, there is

no way you can make up for it. Since all the rest of your life is already owed to God in obedience, how can you find any time to make up for one disobedience? There is no way, and so fallen man is hopelessly indebted to God. The idea that if my good works outweigh my bad ones, I am acceptable to God, is nonsense, in the light of our debts. Try making this work on the level of your earthly debts. God to your bank, or any creditor, and see if he will buy your theology. You simply explain that you have checked over all your payments, and you have discovered that you paid three times for everyone that you missed. Therefore, he has no right to condemn you as a poor risk, and a debtor, for your good deeds far outweigh your bad ones. You know that such insanity could get you committed. Nobody says, if the good outweighs the bad, that eliminates the bad, and makes it of no effect.

The bad has to be dealt with, and the debts have to be covered. So it is with our debts to God. Man has a number of ways of resolving the issue of debts. He has loans, reductions, consolidations of payments, or even bankruptcy. With God there is only one way to deal with our debts. Since they cannot be paid off by us, we are already bankrupt, as far as having any resources to eliminate the debt, so there is only one answer, and that is forgiveness.

Horace said, there is a major rule for drama. Do not bring a god into the play unless the plot is so hopelessly tangled up that only a god can unravel it. This is precisely what happened in the human drama. God followed this very rule, and tried to work with man through the law to resolve the sin problem. But as we know, all the blood of all the Old Testament sacrifices never even paid the debt of one sinner's single sin. It was a hopeless mess, and that is why God sent His Son into the world, for He, and He alone, could unravel the tangled mess, and make it possible for man to have the hope of forgiveness.

Only He could offer an infinite sacrifice able to cover all the debts of man. When Jesus laid down His perfect sinless life, a value greater to God than our minds could ever conceive, He deposited in the bank of heaven that which is available for paying off the debt of every human being. By trusting Him as Savior we gain the privilege that is beyond comprehension, to come daily to God, and have our debts dissolved, and sins forgiven. The poet wrote,

Jesus paid it all,
All the debts I owe,
And nothing, either great or small,
Remains for me to do.

This is true, for there is nothing we can do to add to that infinite account that pays our debt. But Jesus still requires our involvement in this debt dissolving process. It is a part of the Lord's Prayer because He expects us to have a daily desire for the forgiveness of our sins. There are two things that Jesus emphasizes, and which He wants us to be aware of in our daily spiritual journey. They are:

1. The consciousness of our debt's demands.
2. The condition for our debt's dissolving.

Let's examine these two in some detail.

I. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR DEBT'S DEMANDS.

It is something of a paradox to say Jesus paid it all, and yet see here that He demands that we remain conscious of our debt to God, and that we pray continuously for forgiveness. Everyday you are to acknowledge you are a dependent child by asking your heavenly Father for daily bread, and then follow up by acknowledging you are a defiled child, by asking for forgiveness.

Is this something on the order of the husband and wife bickering, he says, "I thought we agreed to forgive and forget." She responded, "I have, but I just don't want you to forget I've forgiven and forgotten." We have a hard time getting rid of old debts, and even when they are paid off, we remain conscious of them, and they weigh us down. The world is full of people who cannot let go of their sin that God has forgiven and forgotten. It is folly to remember what God forgets, and many a Christian has emotional problems because they do it.

This is not what Jesus is teaching us to do here at all. He does not want us to remain conscious of old debts that have been forgiven, but He does want us to be conscious of the fact that we are always entering into new debts, and we need to be aware that this demands a response on our part. The idea that because Jesus paid it all, I can just forget about it all together, and not bother with confession, and seeking forgiveness, is not an idea from the mind of Christ. By this prayer, He says just the opposite. Sin is a perpetual part of the Christian life, and, therefore, forgiveness must be perpetually sought. The money in your bank account is available to you, but you still have to ask for it. If you need it and don't ask, they will not send it to meet your need. So it is with the bank of heaven. Ask, and you shall receive.

Jesus, by saying we ought to pray perpetually for forgiveness, makes it clear that no Christian will ever be sinless in this life. It may be possible to go for some time with no conscious awareness of sin, but the sin of omission is ever with us. All of us fall short of the glory of God. If you are less than what you could be, you are in debt to God, and not a day goes by that we do not incur debt on this level. Remember, this prayer is not for the bad guys. This is the prayer Jesus taught His disciples. It is for the people of God, the body of Christ, and Jesus says these good and godly people are to pray perpetually for the forgiveness of sin.

As long as you are in the body that needs daily bread, you will also need daily forgiveness. First we say give, and then we say forgive. The give and the forgive are so close, because they are linked in life. Adam and Eve were given their daily bread in abundance, but they abused God's gift and ate what was forbidden. The result was, they now needed forgiveness. Every good gift that God gives can be a potential road to debt where we need His pardon.

Jesus wants us to be as conscious of our daily debt, as our daily bread, for forgiveness

is as vital to our health and well being as is the bread for the body. Only when we stop sinning can we stop seeking forgiveness, and that means we can never stop asking for forgiveness. John says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But what if we don't confess? What if we do not acknowledge our debt? It means we pay interest on the debt. Jesus paid it all, but if we do not claim our rights to His account, then, even as redeemed Christians, we will pay interest on that debt. Without forgiveness, and the feeling of sin being dissolved, the Christian can have all the same problems as the non-Christian, who have no solution to their sin problem. It is very simple: The man with a shovel who does not use it, has just as much snow on his driveway, as the man who has no shovel.

Two soldiers eating together in an army base in Japan got to talking, and one asked the other why he had stayed in the army as a career man. The sergeant said, "Did you ever hear of the card game called Rook?" "Yes, I know the game," the private answered.

"Well, I was playing with my family when my father and I got into an argument. I left home and I've never been back." He never lacked daily bread, but he lacked the food of forgiveness. That could have reconciled him and his father. This kind of thing happens all the time, and Jesus is saying, if we will be conscious that we are always part of the problem, and follow the rule of admitting and confessing that we are debtors, we can prevent the breakdown of relationships, through the power of forgiveness. Next Jesus emphasizes,

II. THE CONDITION FOR OUR DEBTS DISSOLVING.

There is a rule that must be followed in being forgiven. There is never a lack of funds to pay our debt, for that is infinite. There is never an unwillingness on the part of God to forgive. He delights in mercy, and no matter how often you come to ask, He never gets weary of it. 7 times 70 does not exhaust his willingness to forgive. Jesus implies that you need daily forgiveness, and so God has no problem with the frequency of our sin and need of forgiveness.

The problem is that we often do not want to fulfill the one condition for being forgiven, for that is the condition that we be forgiving. Only forgivers are forgiven. Jesus makes a special point of this. After the prayer, He makes this comment in verse 14 and 15. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Tennyson was right when he wrote,

Oh, Man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow!
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.
Forgive him seventy times and seven,
For all the blessed souls in heaven,
Are both forgivers and forgiven.

You have to be both, or you are neither. If you are not a forgiver, you will not be forgiven. Any sin becomes a temporary unforgivable sin if the sinner is unwilling to forgive another. This seems like a simple enough condition to fulfill to have your own debt dissolved. It seems fair and just, yet it is obviously one of the hardest things for men to do. The very fact that Jesus had to go out of His way to stress this point, by making special comment on it, makes it clear, it is hard for men to grasp this truth. The fact that it is repeated so often in different context reveals it is a truth that has to come at men from a variety of directions in order to penetrate.

In Matt. 18 Jesus tells a long parable to teach this very truth. The king had mercy on his servant who owed him a large debt, and when he fell on his knees and pleaded for time, the king canceled the debt, and let him go a free man. This man went away and found another servant who owed him a pittance in comparison to what he had just been forgiven. When he demanded payment, his fellow servant fell on his knees, and he begged for time. But he refused, and had the man thrown into prison. When word got back to the master of what he had done, it made him so angry he took the unforgiving wretch, and threw him into prison. Jesus concludes this story by saying, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

This is not exactly good news. We like the forgiveness, but the condition can be a pain, for this two way street often goes against the grain of our pride and prejudice. We don't like to be overly merciful and forgiving to those who sin against us. We do not see the enormous pride this reflects. It is all right for God to forgive offenses against Himself, but we don't see why we should have to be forgiving toward those who gave the audacity to offend us. God may only have one unforgivable sin, but we may have dozens of them. The unforgiving Christian does not realize that he is putting himself above God, and God will not tolerate this.

In Mark 11:25 Jesus teaches this truth again. "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." If you are an unforgiving person, you have lost the key to the bank of heaven. You have burned the bridge by which forgiveness comes to you. This is hard for us to grasp, and that is why it is repeated so often. We are like the naive traveler on his first plane flight to New York. The pilot came on and announced that one of the engines went out. The result would be, they would be an hour late for landing. Later he announced a second engine was out, and now they would be two hours late. Still later came the same announcement when the third engine went out. When the pilot announced that the last engine was out, the guy responded, "Good grief! Now I suppose we will be up here all night." He was not really grasping the reality of the situation. So it is with Christians who assume that dissolving their debts is only a prayer away, while they ignore the clear and frequent teaching that we can only get what we give.

Jesus stresses it again in Luke 6:37-38, "Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you." Forgiveness is like electricity in that, it will not flow in where it cannot flow out. If there is no complete circuit, it will not start. So it is with God's forgiveness. If you do not become a channel of forgiveness, which flows out to those who sin against you, it is like hitting the switch that cuts off the flow of God's forgiveness to

you. This means you can become deader than the Dead Sea. It has inflow, but no outflow. The Christian who is unforgiving has neither, and this is that state where God's grace does not flow in or out of that life. That is why Jesus is perpetually warning His disciples about this danger.

Forgiveness is a great treasure, but you cannot hoard it, and keep it for yourself. You either share it, or yours evaporates. God made it that way. The only way you can keep it is by giving it away. If you hold it, clutch it, and refuse to share it, you lose it. But let go and let God's forgiving spirit flow through you to others, and your cup will be overflowing. The measure you give is the measure you get.

If anybody tells you your relationship to man has nothing to do with your relationship to God, you are talking to a blind man. It has everything to do with it. Unless you are a branch office, where men can come and draw on the forgiveness of Christ to dissolve their debts, the bank of heaven will not release its funds to pay your debts. Can you imagine the Federal Reserve Bank sending funds to a branch that has closed its doors, and refuses to make loans to people to cover their debts? No way! The bank has to let others use their resources, or they will not get resources to use. God has built this into His whole system of mercy as well. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Every prayer for pardon is also a promise to pardon. This means we are debtors both to God and man. We are always under obligation to forgive those who seek our forgiveness.

This sounds tough to swallow, and most people get frightened by the impossible. They think this means we have to be forgiving of everyone regardless of their attitude. Not even God, in His infinite mercy, does this. God does not forgive those who do not repent and seek His forgiveness. Jesus did not pray at the temple, where they were ripping people off, Father forgive them. Instead, He tipped over their tables, and chased them out with a whip. If some of these money changers came to Jesus after this, and said, Master we are sorry for this abuse, please forgive us. He would have forgiven them. The point is, if you are being treated unjustly by someone, and they love it, and refuse to stop, and ask your forgiveness, you are not in debt to them. You do not owe forgiveness to those who refuse to live in peace. God does not owe forgiveness to Satan. It is not beyond His grace, but it is beyond Satan's nature to seek it, and there is no forgiveness where there is no will to seek it. The Prodigal never would have tasted his father's forgiveness had he stayed with the pigs.

Just because the bank is full of money, does not mean it will pay your debts. You have to have some claim on that money to be able to write checks, and pay off your obligations. Christ has made infinite resources available, but you must fulfill this condition to have access to those resources. When you pray, Father forgive me, you are not saying, do it because I promise to never sin again, or because I am resolved to do better, or because I'll try to pay you back, or one hundred and one other reasons. You pray this prayer knowing it can only be answered when you are saying, forgive me because I share the treasure of your forgiving grace with other debtors. Forgive me, because I am a forgiver. Forgive me, because I have the debt dissolving desire.

8. THE DESIRE FOR DELIVERANCE Based on Matt. 6:7-15

Winston Churchill suddenly found himself a 25 year old prisoner of war. This was in 1899. He was captured by the South African Army in the Boer War, and he endured a nightmare. He was the first prisoner of importance to be captured in the war. Churchill roamed the prison camp in Pretoria, as he plotted an escape. Finally, he settled on a plan to go over the wall. It was poorly guarded with only two officers.

The night of the escape began with his hiding in a lavatory. Churchill lead the way, and was the first to go over the wall. He waited for the others, and heard the sounds of frenzied movements and whispered warnings that the guards were coming. The escape was off, but there he was alone on the outside, and he had no maps and no compass. He did not know whether to climb back in, and wait for a better time, or go on his own. He decided this could be his only chance, so he went to the railroad station, and caught a freight train. He had no idea where he was going.

The words spread quickly, and the search was on. His chance of escape was slim. He jumped off the train at dawn, and then made his way through the high grass and swamp. He was miserable under the hot sun. He was weak, and near delirious, and at nightfall he realized he would have to seek help, no matter how dangerous. Someone passed in the darkness, and he called out. By the providence of God, it was the only Englishman in hundreds of miles. Had he spoken to anyone else he would have been arrested, for the whole country was looking for him. To make a long story short, this man was able to get him smuggled out of the country. He eventually made it back to England where he became a hero, and one of the most successful leaders in the history of England. God provided a way of escape for what seemed hopeless odds against him, and that deliverance made all the difference in the world for his future.

Deliverance determines destiny because, though not everyone gets into a mess like Churchill, everyone at some point in life needs to be delivered from some evil. It may be external, or it may be internal. Deliverance is a major theme of the Bible, and of history, and of life, because there is a constant and continuous need in every human life to experience deliverance.

Who are the heroes of history? They are the deliverers. Moses led his people out of Egypt as a great deliverer. The great kings of Israel, like David, and the great judges, like Samson, were deliverers. Over and over history repeated itself as the people became ensnared by evil, and came under the bondage of an oppressor. The Lord would then raise up a deliverer, and the people would sing, "Thou art my help and my deliverer. The Lord is my rock and deliverer." You cannot think of a Biblical character that did not in some way need deliverance, or provide it.

Joseph was delivered from the pit, Potipher's wife, and prison. He was raised up to be a deliverer of his family, and the people of God. David was delivered from Saul, and raised up to deliver his people from their enemies. Daniel was delivered from the lions, and became a great leader. His three friends were delivered from the fiery furnace.

Jonah was delivered from the belly of the fish. The point can be illustrated endlessly. Deliverance is no side street. It is a main road in the word of God. If you look in your concordance the words deliver, deliverance, and deliverer are used so many times from Genesis to Revelation that you will not even be motivated to count them.

The greatest Biblical story of all: The greatest story ever told, is also a story of deliverance. The Old Testament portrayed the coming of the Messiah as the Deliverer. Paul quotes the Old Testament in Rom. 11:26, "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob." The Greek word here for deliver is the one Jesus uses for the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. The word is *rhuomai*. It is the same word used in the cry of Paul in Rom. 7:24. "Who will deliver me from this body of death." In II Cor. 1:10 Paul uses this same word three times. "He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us, on Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us."

Paul did not have any superficial view of life. He did not think of deliverance as a once for all experience, like being saved. He saw it as a continuous, never ending, experience, until that final deliverance, when we escape, not only the penalty and the power of sin, but the very presence, forever. Until then there is no prayer more relevant than-deliver us from evil. It is true, as Paul says in another use of this word, in Col. 1:13. "For He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son..." Jesus has already become our deliverer. But he also looks ahead in I Thess. 1:10 where he uses the word again to say, "Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." There is still future deliverance as well.

Peter calls our attention to the deliverance we are focusing on in this prayer. He uses the same word in II Peter 2:7 to say, "The Lord knows how to deliver godly men from trials." Because he knows how Jesus taught us to pray to Him daily-deliver us from evil. In other words, rescue us in this world of never ceasing threats. Jesus has no superficial view of life, or of the power of evil. Do you think that He, who knows the heart of man better than man knows it, is not aware of the ever present temptation to do evil, even in the lives of His most faithful followers. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet He was without sin. But He is not without awareness that none of His followers will ever be without sin. Do you think He did not know that Christians would get hooked by every piece of bait the subtle serpent would put out to ensnare man? If he got Adam and Eve to fall, who were uncontaminated by sin, why should he fail with the rest of the polluted race?

Jesus knows His disciples will always be sinners, and that is why they need to pray daily for forgiveness. He knew they would be subject to daily temptation. They would be in constant need of deliverance. They have already been delivered from the penalty of sin, and so they are justified. They will be finally delivered from the presence of sin, and so be glorified. But meanwhile, the Christian life is a battle to be delivered from the power of sin, and so be sanctified. Jesus is saying, by this prayer, there are two key elements involved in being successful in this process of sanctification. The first is-

I. THE CONFESSION OF PESSIMISM.

Lead us not into temptation. Here is an awareness of weakness. Don't lead me into temptation, for I can tell you right off that I cannot stand. I will fail and fall, so don't put me to the test. This is the prayer of the aware. I am not one to pretend that if it was me who faced Satan in the garden we would still be in paradise. I am not one to pretend that the sins that have brought others down, could not also bring me down. If pride goes before a fall, then humility should go before a rise, and, therefore, wise is the Christian who is honest and humble about his or her weakness.

This prayer is a confession of pessimism about ones own ability to face temptation and stand. Don't lead me into temptation, we pray, because we know the outcome will be failure, and we will fall. The Christian, who in pride, thinks he can take on the devil in hand to hand combat, and not fear defeat, is not listening to the Word of God. The warnings are to be taken seriously. The Bible says, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." And, "He who stands beware lest he should fall." Someone has said, "It was not for reclining on couches of scented rose leaves that we are bidden to take on the whole armor of God." If we could stand on our own, we would not need all of this armor. The wise and sensible Christian is aware of his weakness, and knows there is a breaking point where he will yield to temptation if he is not delivered.

In George Orwell's book, 1984, he describes how Winston Smith, the central figure in the book, defies the utterly oppressive government. The state has condemned his love for Julia, but he fights the state, and goes on loving her. Even when they arrest him and torture him, he stands fast in his rebellion. Then they took him to room 101. There is shown an ingenious cage where his head can be placed in one end, and a door opened on the other end, where rats can come in and attack his head. Nothing in all the world brought him feelings of more petrifying horror than rats. This was the trial that broke him, and he cried out "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia!" He was broken, and renounced his love. He was now a slave of the state.

Every man has a breaking point, and Jesus is saying, the wise Christian is one who does not need this truth proven, for he knows it is true, and confesses it is so. That is why he needs to pray, don't put me to the test, for I know I will break. Don't let me play Russian roulette with all the chambers loaded. This prayer eliminates all presumption. The Christian who is honest about his weakness is not going to tempt God to spare him, even though he exposes himself to the flames. The Christian who has a weakness for alcohol, and yet goes into a bar to meet his friends, is not being honest. He is saying to God, "I can handle this. You can let me play with fire, for I will not get burned. I am able to resist the power of evil, so you can lead me into temptation, and I will show you I can stand and pass the test."

It may, in fact, be true, that he has such self-control, but he is still being foolish and presumptuous, and many a proud Christian has fallen with this attitude. The same thing is true for any sin. If lust makes you tempted to be immoral in your sexual behavior, you have the more obligation to be honest about your weakness, and avoid whatever leads you into temptation. The greater your weakness, the greater your obligation to avoid an encounter with the evil one, on his terms. If you have a tendency to take things that don't belong to you, pray, Lord don't lead me into temptation. Don't let me be alone in

settings where I am tempted to steal. Let me be with others where this temptation cannot ensnare me. The honest Christian needs to plead for protection from his own weaknesses.

When George Adams Smith, the Bible scholar, was climbing the Alps, they came to a point where the wind was blowing strong, and unconscious of the danger, he rose to get a view over the precipice. Instantly, his guide drew him back down and said, "In a place like this, and in a wind like this, our safety depends on one thing-keeping to our knees." That is what Jesus is saying to us in this prayer. Don't be foolish and presumptuous, and take chances with the forces of evil. Pray for providential guidance to be protected from those situations which are beyond your control. When you are in a dangerous setting, stay on your knees. Any Christian who gets into a situation where he falls into sin, does so because he is not praying this prayer. If he was praying it, and honestly facing up to his own weakness, he would not be in that situation where he falls. There is a way of escape, but like the way to any good goal, it does not get you there unless you take it.

Charles Spurgeon stressed the compassion this prayer can develop in us, as we focus on our own weakness. The hardness of the self-righteous Pharisees was due to their inability to be honest about their own sin. The person who is quick to judge and condemn, and call for harsh treatment of the sinner, is one who is not being honest about his own sinful nature. Spurgeon said, "I am afraid that badly as some behave, under temptation, others of us might have done worse if we had been there. I like, if I can, to form a kind judgment of the erring, and it helps me to do so when I imagine myself to have been subject to their trials....and to have been in their circumstances....should I not have fallen as badly as they have done, or even gone beyond them in evil? He goes on in his sermon to say-

So I think that this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation,"
Should often spring up from the heart through a
charitable feeling towards others who have erred,
who are of the same flesh and blood as ourselves.
Now, whenever you see the drunkard reel through
the streets do not glory over him, but say, "Lead
us not into temptation." When you take down the
papers and read that men of position have betrayed
their trust for gold, condemn their conduct if you will,
but do not exult in your own steadfastness, rather
cry in all humility, "Lead us not into temptation."
It would teach us milder and gentler ways with
sinful men and women if this prayer were as often
in our hearts as it is upon our lips.

This prayer can only be honestly prayed by one with a sense of humility, and an awareness of his own weakness. It does not fit in the life of the proud, the self-sufficient, the arrogant, and self-righteous. It is the child's prayer, and the child's desire for the aid and security that only his heavenly Father can supply. Godet, the great commentator, puts it all together when he writes, "Let me do nothing this day which would force Thee

for a single moment to withdraw Thy hand, and to give me over to the snare which the evil one will plant in my way.... If the occasion of sinning presents itself, grant that the desire may not be found in me. If the desire is there, grant that the occasion may not present itself."

It is this honest confession of pessimism about ones own strength that opens one up to the strength of God. This honest self-pessimism opens the door to Christian escapism. We tend to think of escapism as negative. Like the British officer who was drinking heavily, and he lifted his glass and said, "My friend, this is the swiftest road out of India." The world seeks to escape the unpleasant by means of alcohol, drugs, or sex, and so we frown on escapism. But there is a legitimate escapism. "Flea youthful lust" says the Bible. That is escapism. The getting out of the way of that which can lead to great unpleasantness. Don't fight it, just run.

To priests were talking about the temptations they faced in working with young women in their parish. The one had to move to another location to avoid problems. The other one said he coped with the temptation by always being with a group. The first responded, "You found your safety in numbers. I found mine in exodus." Both were valid means of escapism. That is what Jesus wants us to do in daily life. He wants us to practice escapism by praying, "Lead us not into temptation." Who is better equipped to deal with sins power. The derelict who knows its every twist and turn, or the escapist who has, time and time again, avoided the pit? It is the escapist who is the victor. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is not that the Christian is not tempted to the same sins. They are, but the Christian is an escape artist who has found a way to avoid the trap. It begins with an honest awareness of ones weakness, and a confession of pessimism about ones self. The second element we want to look at is-

II. THE EXPRESSION OF OPTIMISM.

We do not stop on the pessimist note, but go on to express confidence that by God's grace we can delivered. Forgive us our debts is a focus on the past. We have already fallen, and failed to obey God's will, but we are assured we can be forgiven, and restored to fellowship with God. But now, we go one step further. As great as forgiveness is, there is one thing better, and that is escaping the need for it by being delivered from evil. This is a greater victory than forgiveness, for it prevents evil, and all its negative consequences. Forgiveness is one of the greatest wonders of God's grace. We would be sunk without it, but the fact is, deliverance is even greater. To be rescued from the clutches of evil, and not need the healing touch of forgiveness, is the greatest victory of all. Curing a disease is a spectacular blessing, but preventing the disease in the first place is even greater.

The Christian who is maturing in sanctification is the Christian who develops the daily desire for deliverance. He still needs forgiveness, and treasures it, but he aims higher, and grows in confidence that he can be delivered from evil, and not just forgiven for evil. Escape is not only possible, it is expected, for that is what sanctification is all about. It is the shifting the emphasis of life from forgiveness to deliverance. The more mature a Christian becomes, the more they will be into preventative grace rather than curative

grace. We will need the cure of forgiveness until we die, but if we are growing in grace, we will need it less and less, for we will be emphasizing the optimist side of Christian living, which is that of being delivered.

Jesus said, "Thy sins are forgiven, go and sin no more." He gave curative grace, but then said there is preventative grace that can keep you from needing the cure again. This is the spirit of confident optimism He wants us to have everyday, as we pray. Be pessimist about our own weaknesses, but be optimistic about the power of God to deliver. We cannot escape being subjected to temptation, but we can escape being subdued by it. In the musical West Side Story, a group of thugs have gathered at their usual meeting place to boast of their shooting of the leader of another gang. The old man who looked after the store could stand it no longer, and in anger he says, "You know, you make this world lousy!" One of the young gangsters responds, "We found it that way."

This is the spirit of the worldly mind. It is pessimist only. Evil is real, and we are all sinners, and so it is inevitable. We just as well cooperate with the forces of evil, says the pessimist. The Christians finds the world lousy too, and he finds that in his weakness he is tempted to cooperate with the forces of evil. But then comes the element of optimism that makes Christianity the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Deliverance is possible, and deliverance determines destiny. It is always possible to fall, but the good news is, it is also always possible to stand. The Christian needs to hold these two realities in balance. The poet wrote,

From dark temptation's power,
From Satan's wiles defend.
Deliver in the evil hour,
And guide me to the end.

What happens when we do not keep these two opposites of pessimism and optimism in balance is, we become very unrealistic. The Christian who feels a strong temptation to yield to the lust of the flesh, if he only feels his weakness, tends to surrender, feeling that failure is inevitable. He fails to realize that the temptation is not a sin. The possibilities of evil are vast, and the Christian cannot escape them. Jesus had to evaluate the pros and cons of making a stone into bread. He was starving, and the appeal of the idea would have a powerful ally in his flesh. His body would be crying out for him to do it. After a 40 day fast, the thought of a fresh piece of bread would be the most alluring thought possible. Jesus was not just mildly touched by this temptation. It was a powerful appeal, and He felt the put to do it. Feeling the pull and the attraction of evil is not evil in itself. Christians who do not understand this feel that sense they are attracted to the evil, they are already guilty, and so they just give in and do the evil they are attracted to.

Now, if they would express their optimism in God's power to deliver, they could be rescued from this seemingly hopeless situation. If you do not shift out of the low gear of self-pessimism, you will not escape, but if you shift into the high gear of optimism about God's power to deliver you can escape. Paul makes this clear in I Cor. 10:13. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will

also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

Paul is saying, this last request of the Lord's Prayer is already answered. Deliverance is assured. So why should we pray it then? Because a way not sought, is a way not found. There is a way to a lot of places, but people still get lost. There is always a way of escape, but if the Christian does not seek it, he often misses the way, and has to fall back to the level of forgiveness, rather than climb to the level of deliverance. Deliverance is only available, and not necessarily inevitable. Defeat is also possible, and that is why we need to pray so consistently.

This final petition is a desire to climb higher. It is a search for sanctification. It is a saying, "I know I can be forgiven for sin, but I would rather be victorious over sin, and the forces of evil ever at work in the world." It is going full circle, so that the last request ties into the first, hallowed be Thy name. Let me climb higher and higher so that my victory over the power of sin brings greater and greater glory to the name of my God, and my Deliverer. The Christian is not a pessimist or an optimist, but is both a pessimist and optimist. His very awareness of his own weakness keeps him from the folly of depending on his own strength to win over evil. It motivates him to look to his only hope of victory: The Deliverer-Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our example. He did not face the cross with a boastful attitude of self-confidence. He did not say, "This will be no sweat." He sweat drops of blood, and prayed with great humility, and asks that the cup passed from Him if possible. In other words, lead me not into temptation. But He was able to be victorious because he was confident that God would give Him the power to escape, and be delivered from the bondage of death. He had the combination of pessimism and optimism that can lead all of us to that delightful destiny that is determined by deliverance-the destiny of the sanctified life, that brings honor to the name of God.

Our deliverance and God's glory go hand in hand, for not only will others glorify God as we gain the victory, but our Deliverer will be our theme song for all eternity. Therefore, we need to seek it, and pray for it for all time. Some poet has written,

In the time of tribulation,
In the bright and prosperous way,
In the hour of life's prostration,
In the final judgment day.
God of goodness, us deliver,
And Thy name be praise forever.

We can be victorious Christians in time, and even in times of temptation, if we develop this daily desire for deliverance.