

Place: Lurgan Baptist 10:5:2009

Reading: Matthew 6: 1-18

THE PATTERN PRAYER

1. SETTING THE SCENE

The story is told of a young lawyer who had just opened a brand new office. He was seated behind his shiny new desk eagerly awaiting his first client. Soon he heard footsteps in the hall and then a hand upon the doorknob. Wanting to look important he pretended to be busy, so he picked up the telephone and carried on a fake conversation. “ *Yes, yes, I’ll have my secretary ten to that when I can get at it. I have a very heavy schedule before me. Call me back in a few days.* ” He then motioned toward the door, “ ***come in, come in.*** ” The stranger was now in the office listening to the one end of this high level conversation. Finally, the receiver was put back on the hook and the lawyer turned to what he hoped was a prospective client. “ ***Now what may I do for you ?*** ” The man answered, “ ***I’m from the phone company, and I came to connect your telephone.*** ” Now isn’t much of our praying like that ? We are praying to be seen by men, but no one is at the other end of the line. (6:5) That’s the hypocrite in us. That sometimes we use prayer to impress others and call attention to ourselves. Wouldn’t you like to quit playing games and get down to serious business in this matter of prayer ?

I mean from the beginning of the Bible to its end we see absolute evidence that God answers prayer. Everything that God does in the work of ministry He does through prayer.

- Prayer is the way you defeat the devil: (Lk 22:32)
- Prayer is the way you get the lost saved:
 - (Lk 18:13)
 - Prayer is the way you acquire wisdom: (Jam 1:5)
 - Prayer is the way a backslider gets restored:
 - (James 5:16-20)
 - Prayer is how the saints get strengthened: (Jude 20 Matt 26:41)
 - Prayer is the way we get labourers to the mission field: ((9:38)
 - Prayer is how we cure the sick: (Jam 5:13-15)
 - Prayer is how we accomplish the impossible:
 - (Mk 11:23-24)

Because we pray God works through us in ways that He wouldn’t otherwise. You see, the Lord has made certain things dependent on prayer, things that never will be done unless we pray. ***Could God do whatever He chooses without our prayer ?*** Of course. Yet God has determined that He will use the prayers of His people to accomplish His purposes on earth. When we do not pray, we limit what God might do in our lives. James reminds us “ *ye have not because ye ask not.* ” (4:2) My if we want all the blessing God has available to give to us, we, too, must pray. But how are we to pray ? How do we address the Lord ? With what kind of attitude are we to bow our

heads ? With what kind of expectation ? What should I say when I come before the Lord ? Well, I think the answer to those questions is found in “ **The Pattern Prayer.**” You see, the Lord Jesus knew the importance of prayer. The Bible says that He would get up before dawn to pray. (Mk 1:35) He also climbed the Mount of Olives to commune with the Father, sometimes praying all night long. The disciples saw in Christ a tremendous commitment to prayer. That’s probably what prompted them to say, “ *Lord, teach us to pray.* ” (Lk 11:1) When they asked that question, Christ gave them the same pattern that appears in this passage, even though it was a different occasion. Now when you look at this pattern prayer it has to be the greatest statement on prayer ever given in human language. Here is a brief little model prayer consisting of less than seventy words that includes in it all of the basic ingredients of prayer. I want you see here,

(1) THE PRELUDE TO THIS PRAYER

For immediately before Christ taught the disciples the pattern prayer, He gave them some preliminary instructions. He told them that they were some incorrect ways to pray. In effect Christ said to two things to them.

(a) DO NOT BE A HYPOCRITE:

Look if you will at (6:5) In the Jewish culture of Christ’s time people prayed every three hours at 3.00, 6.00, 9.00. What happened was this. The hypocrites used to plan their day so that they would be in the busiest part of the village

when it was time to pray. When they stopped, raised their arms, and prayed flowery, fluent prayers, people around them would say, “ *My, what wonderful godly people they must be.* ” The Lord Jesus tells us not to be like that. He says, “ *Don’t be the play actor who loves to pray in places where he could be assured of a good audience to observe his devotion.* ” My it is not wrong to pray in public. To pray in the assembly (1 Tim 2:1) to pray when blessing food (Jn 6:11) or to pray when seeking God’s help. (Jn 11:41-42 Acts 27:35) There is a place for public prayers but they must be genuine, and they must never take the place of our private praying. David Jeremiah says we must not be like the hen that goes into a secret place to lay her eggs, but by all her cackling announces where she is and what she’s doing. No, Christ says we are to enter our closet and pray to our Father who is in secret. Is this how you pray ? Do you pray in a secret way or a showy way ? (a)

(b) DO NOT BE A HEATHEN:

For Christ says “ *When ye pray use not vain repetitions as the heathen do,* ” (6:7) “ *Vain repetitions,* ” derives from the verb “ *to stammer,* ” with its idea of the multiplication of words without the addition of meaning. Someone once said that “ *one sentence burdened with the heart’s desire is dearer to God than an hour’s rehearsing of words and phrases with no longing behind them.* ” You see, God doesn’t want vain repetitions, He wants real communication. When we pray, He wants us to put our heart into it. Dr. Reuben Torrey, said he could remember when he thought his prayer life would never get off the

ground. He grew up in a Christian family where he was taught to pray as a child, but he said his prayer was mostly a matter of rote and ritual, even after he entered the ministry. When he realized, what real prayer meant, that is, having an audience with God, actually coming into His presence and asking for and getting things from Him, his prayer life was transformed. *Do you know something ?* With some people, praying is like putting the needle on a phonograph record and then forgetting about it. I recall some years ago being in a church prayer meeting away up the country and this brother started praying. After fifteen minutes I opened my eyes to see there was any word of him stopping. There he was with his arms folded, doing a Cooks Tour around the world, engaged in endless repetition. We might not be guilty of the extremes of error into which the heathen fall in their praying, but do some of our prayers not fall into the same category ? Are not many of our prayers formal and heartless repetitions ? (1 Kings 18:26) The Lord Jesus says that we are to pray secretly and sincerely. (1)

(2) THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRAYER

Why did Christ teach His disciples this prayer ? Well, think again, about the setting out of which this prayer arose. Luke tells us “ *And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray.* ” (11:1) In other words the motivation for this prayer was found in the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Himself. Now if you had walked with the Lord for about three years, had seen everything that Christ did, had heard everything that

Christ had to say, I wonder what it was that would be impressed on your mind ? Well, we know that they heard Christ preached and how His preaching must have impressed them. We know that the Saviour healed people, and how that must have impressed them. Yet when you consider everything they saw and heard in the life of Christ, it is significant to notice that they came to Jesus and said, “ *Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught His disciples.* ” They didn’t say “ *Lord teach us to preach,* ” as important as that is, they didn’t say, “ *Lord teach us to heal,* ” they said “ *Lord, teach us to pray.* ” And Christ gave to them verses that some refer to as “ The Lord’s Prayer,” a term that goes back to Cyprian of Carthage about AD 250, although its use a recited prayer probably precedes even that date. You see, what we have here is,

(a) A MODEL PRAYER:

An example or pattern that people might want to follow. Notice for example how our Lord begins, “ *After this manner therefore pray ye,* ” Christ did not say “ *use exactly these words and no other.* ” Rather He is setting down an example, a skeleton, a model on which to fashion our prayers. Just as God prescribed Moses a pattern of the Tabernacle (Ex 25:9) so Christ here prescribed the disciples a pattern for prayer. Now many people misunderstand the Lord’s instruction regarding this prayer in (Ch 6) Instead of learning how to pray from the Disciples Prayer we recite it. However, it’s not a prayer to be recited but a pattern for all prayer. You see, this prayer is recorded twice in Scripture in (Matthew Ch 6) and in

(Luke Ch 11) In both accounts the prayer is substantially the same, but the words are different. If the Lord was giving us a prayer to be memorized, He would not have used different words in the same passage. For example in (Matt 6:12) He says, “ *Forgive us our debts,* ” but in (Lk 11:4) He says, “ *Forgive us our sins.* ” The disciples say to the Lord Jesus, “ *Lord, teach us to pray.* ” They didn’t say “ ***Teach us a prayer.*** ” My there is a difference between reading from a prayer book and knowing how to pray. The Lord Jesus says, “ *When ye pray use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.* ” Would Christ have given us a prayer to recite after saying that ? No. He was saying we should avoid vain repetition. My there is no other place in the entire New Testament where this prayer is recited. It is a model to pattern your prayers after, a skeleton that you are to put meat on. Recently we had a family wedding that I was not able to attend because I was in the USA. My brother in law was keen that I give him some idea as to what he was to say as the father of the groom.

Well, there are two ways that we can help a person in this situation. A speech can be written out for him, or the person seeking help, may be given an outline, a pattern, a guide, through which he is able to express things in his own way. You see, the disciples wanted to pray but they really didn’t know how, so Christ gave them an outline, a pattern, a roadmap for prayer. Indeed as you have traveled down this sacred motorway did you notice that this “ ***Pattern Prayer,*** ” covers every relationship we have with God. When we say,

1. “ *Our Father,* ” that’s the ***Father/child relationship***
2. “ *Hallowed be Thy name,* ” that’s the ***Deity/worshipper relationship.***
3. “ *Thy kingdom come,* ” that’s the ***Sovereign/subject relationship.***
4. “ *Thy will be done,* ” that’s the ***Master/servant relationship.***
5. “ *Give us daily bread,* ” that’s the ***Benefactor/beneficiary relationship.***
6. “ *Forgive us our trespasses,* ” that’s the ***Saviour/sinner relationship.***
7. “ *Lead us not into temptation,* ” that’s the ***Guide/pilgrim relationship.***
8. “ *For thine is the kingdom,* ” that’s the ***Creator/creature relationship.***

Do you see that this “ *Pattern Prayer,* ” covers every relationship we have with God ? “ *Now,* ” says, Christ, “ *here is the skeleton which you have to clothe.* ” (a)

(b) A UNIVERSAL PRAYER:

That is, it is meant for all Christians, in all places and at all times. Here we are brought face to face with one of the most important topics in the Christian life, prayer. You see, there are two spiritual activities that should never cease in a believer’s life, two great pillars that hold a Christian up in his daily living. The study of God’s Word and prayer. Do you recall what the apostles said, “ *We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.* ” (6:4) When we pray we speak to God, when we study the Bible, God speaks to us. The

Scriptures say we are to be unceasingly involved in both activities. We are to meditate on the law of God day and night. (Ps 1:2) The same is true about prayer. We are to “*pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thes 5:17) Prayer and Bible study are to be the consuming elements of a believer’s life. Indeed prayer is the highest activity of the human soul, it is the ultimate test of a believer’s true spiritual condition. As Robert Murray McCheyne said, “*what a man is on his knees alone before God, that he is and no more.*” My how is your prayer life ? Do you have a prayer life ? George Mueller, a great man of prayer, was asked how much time he spent in prayer. His reply was, “*I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk, when I lie down and when I rise. The answers are always coming.*” For Mueller prayer was a way of life. Is it that for you ? Or could it be that you are struggling in your prayer life ? Well, Christ says, “*here are the headings for prayer.*”

(3) THE PARTS OF THIS PRAYER

For “*The Pattern Prayer,*” evidently consists of two parts. Did you notice them ? You see the first three petitions relate to,

(a) **GOD AND HIS GLORY:**

Look at the three fold occurrence of the word “*Thy.*” “*Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will.*” You see, this prayer begins by giving God His proper place. When you set God in His rightful place in your prayers, everything else will flow from that. It is only then that we turn to our needs and requests. My here is a prayer which is half way

through before the needs of folk are mentioned. ***Do you see how we have reversed the order that our Lord Jesus laid down ?*** I mean, are our prayers not so self-centred and self-seeking ? Are you so busy thinking of what you want, that you have no time to think of what God wants ? Are you so concerned with your own desires that you never think of the will of God ? Do you see how Christ begins ? Here is a prayer that puts God in the centre of the picture. That is concerned with the honour and glory of God. Do you acknowledge God’s sovereignty when you pray ? Are you concerned about God’s glory ? Many believers think that prayer is merely for themselves yet Christ says, “*whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*” (Jn 14:13) God wants to put His glory on display in answer to our prayers. So when you pray, don’t do it just to inform God what is happening in your life. Don’t pray in an attempt to badger Him to do what you want Him to do. Rather in your prayers be concerned with His glory. The last three petitions relate to

(b) **MAN AND HIS NEED:**

Did you notice that the word “*us,*” is prominent ? “*Give us,*” “*Forgive us,*” “*Lead us.*” Do you see how comprehensive this prayer is ? Look at them again.

- “*Give us our daily bread,*” That’s a prayer for our ***present need:***
- “*Forgive us our debts,*” that’s a prayer for our ***past sin:***

- “ *Lead us not into*,” that’s a prayer for our ***future welfare:***

You see, these three short petitions take life, past, present and future and lay it before God. Food for the present, forgiveness for the past, and help for the future, all of life is brought into the presence of God. But these three petitions do even more than that. For bread speaks of our physical needs, forgiveness deals with our mental needs, and protection deals with our spiritual needs. But these three petitions do even more than that. When we pray,

- “ *Give us our daily bread,*” we think of ***God the Father*** as the Creator and Sustainer of all life. (Acts 17:28)
- “ *Forgive us our debts,*” we think of ***God the Son*** the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind. (1 Jn 1:7)
- “ *Lead us not*,” we think of ***God the Holy Spirit***, the guide, helper and protector of His people.

You see, these three petitions bring us face to face with the Triune God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three petitions take the whole of life to the whole of God. Now tell me, when you pray, do you follow the pattern laid down by Christ here ? Do you begin by giving God His proper place ? Do you come into His presence recognizing who He is ? Do you acknowledge His sovereignty ? Do you desire His glory ? And only then do you go on to take life’s past, present and future and lay it before the Lord. There’s a final thing I want you to notice about this prayer.

(4) THE PROCEEDINGS FOR THIS PRAYER

For this “ *Pattern Prayer,*” flowed out of the prayer life of Jesus Christ. There was a simplicity, a fervency and a propriety in His prayer life that so affected the disciples that they desired to sit at His feet, if it was but to learn how to pray and what to pray for. Perhaps, like us the disciples were at a loss, when it came to communicating with the Lord. So they came to Him saying, “ *Lord teach us to pray as John also taught His disciples.*” (Lk 11:1) My there is no one who can teach us to pray like the Saviour. You see, to be a perfect teacher of prayer there are two conditions that need to be fulfilled. The first is,

(a) *A Perfect Knowledge of God’s Character & Purpose:*

I mean who knows the Father like the Son ? The writer to the Hebrews tells us “ *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.*” (Heb 1:3) That phrase carries the idea of “ *the exact imprint.*” Literally, Jesus Christ is the “ *exact representation of the very substance of God.*” Only He could honestly say, “ *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*” (Jn 14:19) As J.B. Philips puts it, Jesus Christ is “ *God in focus.*” My the lines of Deity have been reproduced in Christ’s humanity. He who was with the Father “ *before the world was,*” “ *hath declared Him.*” The Lord Jesus who has perfect knowledge of the Father’s will and character, is the One who is able to teach us the petitions that are according to God’s will and to God’s glory. Do you see this “ *Pattern Prayer,*” ? If you will make this your model, your guide,

your roadmap, you'll be praying according to the will of God and it will all be to the glory of God.

(b) A Perfect Knowledge of Man's Condition & Need:

You see, to know man, every man, all that is in man is only possible to Him who is truly God and truly Man. No-one but Christ can call Himself, "*The Son of Man,*" and of no one else can we say what was said of Him, "*the man Christ Jesus.*" (1 Tim 2:5) You see, He knows our state, our needs, our problems, our sorrows, our trials. The One who taught His disciples to pray is perfect God, that's why we have no doubt that the petitions He names are acceptable to God. But the One who taught His disciples to pray His perfect Man, that's why we have no doubt that the petitions He names are applicable to man. We can be sure therefore that God will answer every prayer after this pattern. (1 Jn 5:14)

In talking with many Christians over the years I have discovered a deep frustration on the part of God's people when it comes to prayer. Some who have been Christians for many years frankly confess that prayer has been a struggle from the beginning. Andrew Murray said, "***If we do not learn how to pray when we are younger we will struggle with it all of our lives.***" Is prayer a struggle for you ? It must have been for the disciples. Why else would they have come to Christ one day and say, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" "*Lord, please show us how to pray like you pray.*" And then He gave us this prayer. My like the disciples have you a teachable spirit ?

Will you approach the Lord, honestly, openly, sincerely and say, "*Lord teach me to pray ?*"

**O Thou, 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.**