

Place Lurgan Baptist 28:6:2009

THE PATTERN PRAYER

Readings: Matthew 6:24-34 6:11

6. DAILY PROVISION FOR DAILY NEEDS

I heard about an old farmer who had come in from the backwoods and was in town one weekend. He walked into one of the local restaurants and there were some of the local hoodlums there. Well, he sat down at his table and ordered his meal. When they brought his meal he bowed his head and he prayed. He gave thanks to the Lord and they looked over and laughed, “*How funny that old timer praying.*” And when he got through praying one of them said, “*Hey, old timer, does everybody where you come from bow their heads before their meals?*” He never even looked up as he retorted, “*everybody but the hogs.*” You pray, don’t you and thank God for your daily needs? You see, God wants us to live in daily dependence on Him, one day at a time, every day of your life, coming to God and asking Him to provide for the needs of your life. “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” Now did you notice that there is a change in emphasis here? We have noted that the **Pattern Prayer** consists of two parts. The first three petitions deal with God and His Glory. The second three petitions deal with Man and his Need. The first three petitions “*hallowed be thy name,*” “*Thy kingdom come,*”

“*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,*” focus on God and His glory. But the last three petitions “*give us this day our daily bread,*” “*Forgive us our debts,*” and “*lead us not into temptation,*” focus on man and his need. You see, not until we put God in His rightful place can we pray properly about our needs. Now it’s interesting to notice **how comprehensive** these last three petitions are. Indeed all our great needs are summed up in them. “*Give us, forgive us, lead us.*” In such a small compass the Lord Jesus covers the whole life of the believer in every respect. “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” that takes care of our **physical needs**. “*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,*” that takes care of our **mental needs**. “*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,*” that takes care of our **spiritual needs**. Moreover, bread takes care of the present, forgiveness takes care of the past, and spiritual help takes care of the future. Now this petition does not seem to deal with matters of earth shattering importance. It paints the picture of a number of saints who are no doubt insignificant in the eyes of the world, praying for something as mundane as bread to eat.

Yet according to our Saviour, the God of heaven, the One who holds the world in His hand, who maintains the heavenly spheres in their appointed places, and regulates their ceaseless motion, is our Father who hears us when we cry to Him. *Imagine coming from praying about the Lord’s will to praying about daily bread.* Yet that tells me that God our God is interested in the minutest details of our daily life. That such a God should be prepared to consider your little needs and mine even down to the detail of our daily bread is mind boggling. Yet is this not

what the Saviour is teaching here ? Now remember that all twenty eight chapters of Matthew's gospel present Christ as King, and (Ch's 5-7) present the principles of His kingdom, including the proper pattern for prayer. Here we have all the necessary ingredients for praying according to Christ's standard. And one element is praying for daily bread. " *Give us this day our daily bread,*" (6:11) Here I see,

(1) THE PRIORITY OF THE KING

Is it not striking that out of the six or seven petitions in the *Pattern Prayer*, only **one** refers to physical matters. " *Give us this day our daily bread.*" That means we are to give more attention to spiritual matters such as the cause of Christ, and personal holiness, than to bodily needs. This is not to undervalue the importance of physical needs, but to stress the priority of spiritual needs. Here is a warning that is urgently needed as a visit to most church prayer meetings will confirm. My is it not so often true that the prayer list is nearly completely given over to requests that have to do with health and wealth ? While it is legitimate to bring such needs before the Lord in prayer, they must not be allowed to control our prayer times, so that we lose sight of what is spiritual and eternal. Look again at how Christ divides this prayer in two. The first part is taken up with God and His glory. Do you see it ? " *Hallowed be thy name,*" " *Thy kingdom come,*" *Thy will be done,*" and then after that, our bread, our debts, our protection, our temptations. You see, there is a priority that needs to be established. Now all of this is wrapped up in the same chapter in (6:33) In other words,

(a) ***MATERIAL THINGS MUST BE SECONDARY:***

For in contrast to the Gentiles or pagans who crave for food, drink, and clothing, we are urged to seek first the kingdom. Sure, there are legitimate things that call for our attention, but there is one thing which we must never forget. We are made for God, to love God, to serve God, to worship God, to enjoy God, and to glorify God. (1 Cor 10:11 Rev 4:11) Of course we come to God in prayer, we bring our needs to the Lord. But we do not start by praying " *Give us this day our daily bread,*" rather we start by giving His proper place. We start like this, " *Our Father which art in heaven,*" we put the Lord first. Do you know what's wrong with so many believers in Ulster. They're trying to put things first and God second, and they wonder why it doesn't work. Is that what you are doing ? When the Lord Jesus talks about " *things,*" He was thinking about what we put in that is food, (6:31) what we put on, that is clothes (6:31) but then the list is endless, for many believers put material things first. What is your main priority in life ? Is it your business, job, family ? Why all of these things are good. Working hard, caring for our family, making provision, but everything in its proper order.

You see, Satan is so subtle in that, he takes the legitimate things of life, and he fills our minds, consumes our energy, clouds our vision, and saps our strength with " *these things.*" Is that what he has done with you ? I mean are you more concerned with acquiring wealth down here, than up there ? Are you more obsessed with the stock market than you are with the kingdom ? (a)

(b) SPIRITUAL THINGS MUST BE PRIMARY:

“ *But seek ye first the kingdom of God*,” (6:33) That word “ *first,*” means “ *principally, above everything else, give this priority.*” What “ *the kingdom of God and His righteousness,*” live for the kingdom, allow the Lord to bring you more under His righteous sway, seek to bring others into the kingdom, have a heart for the lost. And seek a holy life. When Bishop Cassels first went out to China as one of the Cambridge Seven, do you what he stuck on every piece of luggage that he was bringing with him ? Just two words that were burning in his heart “ **God first.**” Are you prepared for that ? Henry Drummond once said, “ *Above all things do not touch Christianity unless you are willing to serve the kingdom first, I promise you a miserable existence if you seek it second.*” You see, when you say, “ *Dear Lord, I put you first, I put your cause first, your kingdom first, your Word first, your will first,*” then God says, “ *Very well, my son, then I will take care of your affairs.*” Are you putting God first ? Do you give Him the first thoughts in the morning ? Do you give Him the first day of the week ? Do you give Him the first fruits of your income ?

“ *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*” (Prov 3:9-10) Or do you say, “ *Well, we’ll pay all our bills first and see what we have left, and maybe we can give the Lord something.*” My is God first in your desires ? Is there anything that you love more than you love Him ? My God is going to take care of our daily

bread if we understand there is a priority that must be established. The spiritual must take precedence over the material. (1)

(2) THE PETITION TO THE KING

What a simple request. “ *Give us this day our daily bread,*” does that seem irrelevant to you ? When was the last time you prayed, “ *Lord I plead with You to provide a meal for me ?*” I think most of us should sound more like this, “ *Lord keep me from eating another meal. Teach me self-discipline because I need to lose weight.*” We usually have more than enough food so this request seems remote to us. But that’s because we have not unlocked the wonderful truths in this petition. Notice for example that this request speaks about,

(a) THE SUBSTANCE:

“ *Bread,*” (6:11) Now Christ is not referring to a loaf of bread here. Rather He is talking about physical necessities. Martin Luther was right when he said in his catechism on the Lord’s Prayer that bread is the symbol for everything necessary for the preservation of this life, like food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government and peace. You see, the word “ *bread,*” here refers to the physical necessities of life, not the luxuries. We can’t use this verse to ask God for luxuries. In other words this petition address’s our need not our greed. As someone has said God is telling us that He will give us our daily bread, not our daily cake. It is the *necessities* of life not the *niceties* of life. Did you

know that there is current movement in Christianity that says we can demand things from God ? Even as far as back as 1983 when I was preaching in South Africa, this movement was rife. One day as I was traveling, a brother in Christ said “ *Look over there. That’s one of the biggest charismatic churches in South Africa. Do you know what they do there ?* ” I said, “ *No.* ” He said “ *they pray for Rolls Royce cars. But that’s not all. They even tell God the colour they want.* ” My the Lord may give us more than bread He usually does, but Christ stresses the thought of daily bread to teach us the lesson of contentment. Do you recall what Paul said to Timothy, “ *having food and raiment let us therewith be content.* ” (1 Tim 6:8) Someone has said, “ ***people are made happy less by reality than by comparison.*** ” In other words, what makes them happy is not what they possess, but how their possessions stack up in comparison with what others have. Is that you ? Are you driven by envy and greed ? Is your contentment being destroyed because you think others have more than you ? Well, the Lord Jesus said, “ *After this manner therefore pray ye give us bread.* ” (a)

(b) THE SOURCE:

Christ taught us to pray for bread that we might recognize who is the source of all things. A little boy was carrying a loaf of bread and a man said to him “ *Son, where did you get that bread ?* ” “ *Oh,* ” he said, “ *I got it from the baker.* ” He said, “ *But where did the baker get it ?* ” “ *Oh,* ” he said “ *he baked it.* ” “ *With what did he bake it ?* ” “ *Why with flour.* ” “ *Well, where did he get the flour ?* ”

“ *Well, he ground some corn.* ” “ *But where did he get the corn ?* ” “ *Well, he got it from the merchant.* ” “ *But where did the merchant get it ?* ” “ *Oh, he got it from the farmer.* ” “ *Well, where did the farmer get it ?* ” “ *Well, he got it from God.* ” Then the man said, “ *Son, where did you get that loaf of bread ?* ” He said, “ *I got it from God.* ” Do we not need to understand that ? You see, we tend to think that we provide everything for ourselves. We say, “ *I make my living. I earn my wages. I buy my bread. What do I owe God ?* ” Is that attitude not often revealed by the way we act ? When was the last time you said, “ *Lord, I thank You for my daily bread. I thank You for giving me food to eat, clothes to wear, a shelter over my head. I thank you that I have a bed to rest in and that I have enough physical strength to know You and live life in a way that is rich and meaningful.* ” My everything you possess, God provided. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Preserver of the entire universe. Everything that we have is from His hand.

The psalmist says, “ *man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until evening. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! in wisdom thou hast made them all, the earth is full of Thy riches.* ” (Ps 104:23-24)

Paul poses the question “ *And what hast thou that thou didst not receive ?* ” (1 Cor 4:7)

James testifies, “ *Every good and perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights.* ” (1:17) Its God who gives us everything. Some of you might say, “ *Well, you know I’ve got plenty in the bank, in the stocks and shares, in the building society. I don’t need to ask God to give my daily bread.* ” No. Well, look at

(6:19) You know all that you've got invested someone might be getting it right now. Look at (6:20) I don't care how much money you have you better learn to pray at the beginning of each day, " *Give us this day our daily bread,*" for you don't how quickly it can be taken from you, or you can be taken from it. Some of you might say, " *I earn my money.*" Do you ? The Bible says, " *it is God that giveth thee power to get wealth.*" (Deut 8:18) It is God who gives you the capacity to bend your back, open your mouth, talk, think, make a living. Do you see the money you get from the bank ? It was made from materials God created. The paper came from trees and the coins from minerals. We are utterly dependant upon God's provision. " *All things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee.*" (1 Chron 29:14) Anything you gave back to God He originally gave to you. My do you really see God as the source of everything ? Are you truly thankful ? Do you thank God for daily mercies ?

A little boy from a Christian home was invited to his friend's house for dinner. When it was time to eat, everyone in the house just dug right in, without pausing to give thanks. The little boy looked up and asked, " *Don't you pray before you eat ?*" The amused host answered, " *Well, no we don't.*" To which the little boy replied, " *Oh, neither does my dog,*" and picked up his own fork. Dogs don't understand but you do. And Christ instructs us to ask our Father to supply with us daily bread. Why ? That we might recognize that our very lives depend on His goodness. (a) (b)

(c) ***THE SEEKERS:***

Who are the seekers of daily bread ? We are. The petition says " *Give us,*" and this precludes all selfishness in our prayers. It stresses the concept of sharing. John says, " *Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?*" (1 Jn 3:17) Has God used in the past to meet the needs of others ? What about the present ? Are there needs that you could be relieving now ? (a) (b) (c)

(d) ***THE SCHEDULE:***

The Greek term translated " *this day,*" means either " *from day to day,*" or " *for the coming day.*" You see, Christ was stressing God's provision for our needs on a daily basis, for He wants us to live one day at a time. God does not provide for today's needs tomorrow. He is never late. God does not provide for tomorrows needs today. He is never early. Do you remember when God provided manna for the children of Israel when they were out in the desert ? Morning by morning they gathered it. (Ex 16:21) Do you know something ? This encouraged the people to trust God for one day at a time for daily bread. My don't be worrying about the unknown future and the things that may never happen.

***Lead Thou me on, keep Thou my feet
I do not ask to see, the distant scene
One step enough for me***

(3) **THE PROVISION FROM THE KING**

For here God promises to feed those who are righteous. Look at what Christ says in (7:11) Do you recall what David said, “ *I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.* ” (Ps 37:25) Isn't it tremendous to know that God has promised to meet our physical needs ? How does God do it ?

(a) SUPERNATURALLY: The Hand of the Sovereign:

Speaking of His creatures the psalmist says of God “ *Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.* ” (Ps 104:28) Have there not been times when God has done supernatural miracles in caring for those who are His own ? For forty years God provided manna for the children of Israel in the wilderness. For twelve months Elijah was cared for at The Raven Hotel. “ *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening.* ” (1 Kings 17:6) Ravens were unclean birds (Lev 11:15,20) yet God miraculously changed the nature of these birds so that they did not eat the meat themselves but brought it to Elijah. Have you ever experienced any of God's ravens ? (a)

(b) GENEROUSLY: The Hands of the Saints:

Do you recall there was need in Judaea ? The church in Antioch rose to the occasion and they sent supplies “ *to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.* ” (Acts 11:30) Paul's heart went out to the poor saints in Jerusalem. They had such great need that he traveled all over Asia Minor collecting money for them.

(Rom 15:26 2 Cor (Ch's 8-9) Paul was energetically involved in collecting money to meet the needs of poor people, yet at the same time he had no sympathy for anyone who was poor simply because he was unwilling to work. Sure, there have been times when God has provided supernaturally but He usually meets our needs through other Christians. For where is a Christian community, there will be a caring attitude.

(c) PRIMARILY: The Hands of the Seeker:

That is, our own hands. Paul says, “ *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour working with his hands the thing which is good.* ” (Eph 4:28) Do you know the primary way our needs are met ? By the sweat of our brow. God says “ *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.* ” (Gen 3:19) So we are not supposed to say, “ *I am spiritual, I'll wait until God sends some ravens to feed me.* ” No, we are to feed and clothe ourselves. Do you recall what was happening in the church at Thessalonica ? There were some hyper spiritual people there, “ *spiritual,* ” in quotation marks, not really spiritual and they were saying, “ *Well, we're just going to wait and pray and wait on Christ to return. We're not going to go work, we are too spiritual to go to work.* ” Do you remember Paul's answer to such people ? “ *For even when we were with you this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* ” (2 Thes 3:10) Now it does not say if any man cannot work. We have a responsibility to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.

That's not what it says. *Its not talking about a man who wants a job and cannot get one.* Its not talking about widows and orphans and people like that who cannot supply for themselves. Its talking about a person who refuses to work, who just lies around all day. You see, laziness has no Biblical warrant. Jack Sin in the Evangelical Times says,

One gets the impression that Christian believers consider work to be a necessary evil rather than a blessing from God. This is both bad theology and bad psychology. Remember that work was given to man in his perfect state before the Fall and not after it. (Gen 2:15)

Let me say, if there are some Christian workers, pastors, missionaries who are using their calling as an easy touch, they are dishonoring the Lord. How does God provide for us ? (a) (b) (c) Through our own efforts.

Do you have a need in your life ? The Lord Jesus teaches you to pray, “ *Give us this day our daily bread.* ” He is saying “ *I will meet your needs.* ” A tired looking woman came into a grocery store and asked if she could have enough food to make Christmas dinner for her children. The grocer asked her how much money she had. She said, “ *Well, my husband was killed in the war and I have nothing to offer but a little prayer.* ” The store keeper was not very sympathetic, so he said mockingly, “ *You write your prayer on a piece of paper and I'll weight it.* ” To his surprise the lady took a piece of paper from her pocket and handed it to the man saying, “ *I wrote this during the night while looking after my sick baby.* ” The grocer took

the piece of paper, and he placed the unread prayer on the weight side of his old fashioned scales. He said, “ *I will give you all the food that these scales will hold until they are perfectly balanced.* ” He began to pile food on the other side of the scale, but to his amazement, the scale would not go down. He continued to put food on the scale, but still the scale refused to go down. He kept piling food on, until he had enough to go into two full bags. He became angry and frustrated and said, “ *That's all these scales will hold, but you'll have to put the food in the bags yourself, I'm busy.* ” With trembling hands the woman filled two bags full of food, expressed her thanks and left. After, everyone left the store that day, the grocer examined the scales, and you guessed it, they were broken. They were broken just in time for God to answer the prayer of that woman. As the years the grocer could not get that incident out of his mind. ***Why did that woman come at just that time ? Why had the scales broken before she walked in ? Why didn't he bother to examine the scales ?***

The grocer was an old man. The weight of that paper never left him. He never saw that woman again, yet she stood out more than any customer he had ever served. He kept that slip of paper on which that woman's prayer had been written, simple but full of faith, “ *Please, Lord, give us this day our daily bread.* ” My ... the needs of life are daily, but the Lord has promised to meet our needs “ ***day by day.*** ”

