

Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Prayer? (Part 5)

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I. Introduction

Bringing the Father's Kingdom to all the nations will require that we live in the Father's forgiveness—that we receive it and give it to others. It also requires His guidance and protection from a scheming and cunning enemy, thus, the Lord teaches us to pray.

II. What Does Jesus Want Us to Learn from the Lord's Prayer?

The Lord's Prayer has six parts, Matthew 6:9-13, we covered the first three parts of the Lord's Prayer in the previous sermon (The Father's: Character [6:9], Kingdom [6:10], and Provision [6:11]). The second half of the Prayer talks about the Father's: Forgiveness (6:12), Guidance (6:13a), and Protection (6:13b). The Father wants us to take His Kingdom of truth to the rest of the world which is blinded by Satan's lies. As we go, we're going to need the Father's forgiveness, guidance, and protection.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" the Father wants His Kingdom to come down to earth. In the Garden of Eden we lost paradise, i.e., the Father's Kingdom was infiltrated by sin and death. From that moment on God's goal was to bring His Kingdom back. One of the things He needed to do this is forgiveness. Forgiveness is how God restored Adam and Eve to their rightful place. And when Jesus came to bring the Kingdom back, to show us how to live life in the Father's Kingdom, forgiveness was part of that restoration, Mark 2:3-12. After all, what was the point of the Cross, why did Jesus have to die? To allow us a way back to God, to forgive our sins, Colossians 1:14; 2:13.

So as we live life in our Father's Kingdom, there will be times when we step out of line with others and with our Father. In order to restore harmony to these relationships, forgiveness must be given and received. If forgiveness is not given and/or received, then our relationships with each other and our Father will suffer. Case in point: the Prodigal Son. He needs his Father's *and* his brother's forgiveness, Luke 15:1-3, 11-32. The younger son sinned terribly against his father and God disciplined him severely. But when he repented, the father completely forgave him and celebrated his son's return. But the older brother refused to forgive; he was filled with anger towards his brother and his father. It blinded him; all he could see was what he was going to lose due to his brother's irresponsibility and what his father never gave him—which was a lie, his father loved him, Luke 15:3.

This leads to something else that happens to us when we fail to live in the Father's forgiveness. Our view of ourselves becomes twisted: the older brother believed he was better than the younger brother and unloved by his father, Luke 15:28-30. The woman caught in adultery saw herself as an adulteress and so did the crowd, but Jesus' forgiveness saw her as a beloved child of God, John 8:1-11. Peter saw himself as a wicked sinner who didn't deserve to be in God's presence. But Jesus' forgiveness saw a fisher of men, Luke 5:1-10. Satan loves it when we don't live in the Father's forgiveness. He uses it to blind us and destroy our relationships with God and each other, Matthew 6:14-15; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11. This is why God commands that both the offender and the offended do everything in their power to ask for and give forgiveness to each other, Matthew 5:23-26; 18:15-17.

“And do not lead us into temptation” this doesn’t mean that God is going to lead us into a tempting situation which may cause us to sin. God cannot be tempted by evil nor does He tempt anyone, James 1:13. He’s a Loving Father not a wicked father who leads his children to sin. This section of the Lord’s Prayer is about the Father leading us, guiding us. The way His Kingdom will come to earth is by us going out and bringing His Kingdom of salvation and forgiveness to a lost world; this is us making disciples of the nations, Matthew 28:18-20. And as we go, we ask God to guide us in a way that keeps us protected. His guidance is connected to His protection, which is the next part of the Prayer.

“But deliver us from the evil one” God warned us that our battle would be spiritual; it won’t be won with bullets and bombs. Instead, it will be won with spiritual weapons provided by our Father for our protection and victory, Ephesians 6:10-18. Our enemy is deadly; his goal is to steal, kill and destroy, John 10:10. Thus, we ask our Father to deliver us from Satan.

How does Satan attack and how does the Father protect us? Satan’s tactics haven’t changed; what he did to Adam and Eve, he does to us today. One of his main weapons is lying. But he’s very subtle and cunning when he lies. The battle always begins in our minds. Why did Peter *think* he was too wicked for the Lord, where did he get this idea and was it true? The Lord had shown Peter, over and over, not only that he could be around the Lord but that He was going to use Peter for ministry, Luke 5:1-7. So where did Peter get this lie that he was too wicked for the Lord? Where do any of us get such terrible views of ourselves? Satan uses everything—our parents, grandparents, circumstances, failures, on, and on—to get us to believe his lies. Case in point: we’ll call her “Dorothy”

Dorothy thought she was worthless. Why? Because when she was a little girl, her grandmother told her that people who can’t work are useless; they don’t even have a right to say God’s name. After her injury she couldn’t work. This began a difficult journey of relying on God for everything, which made her feel worse; it reminded her of everything she couldn’t do. When I encouraged her that God was using her powerfully, she couldn’t see it. All she saw was a weak woman who was selfish, mean to people, an egotist, arrogant, whose usefulness had passed. Where did she get this false view of herself? It started with her mother, then her grandmother, then her husband, then her horrible circumstances as she tried to provide a better life for her kids, and by the time her kids were grown and married, all she saw was an uneducated woman who was unable to contribute anything to life.

How did the Father protect “Dorothy” from Satan’s lies? I brought His Kingdom into “Dorothy’s” life. I helped her put on His armor with the truth: she was far from weak; she made her way to another country by herself and brought her kids *and* husband. She ensured that her kids were fed, clothed, and had a home. And she really began to shine after her injury. God had given her tremendous artistic, culinary, and people skills which she used to help many at her new residence. She brought life and hope to people who didn’t have any, reached people no one else could. Far from being selfish, she helped everyone who asked. With one conversation, “Dorothy” could connect with a stranger and bring them hope. This was the real “Dorothy” the one God made, Psalm 139:13-16.

III. Conclusion

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.