

16. The Book of Acts—2:42

(8/19/26)

We are currently in the third major section of chapter 2 which runs from verses 42-47, a section we're calling—**“The Practice of the Early Church”**:

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

“And they continued steadfastly...in prayer.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray—He gave them a model prayer to use as a guideline or a ‘template when they prayed.

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ 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.

Let me give you the breakdown of this prayer:

- 1. God's Person—v.9**
- 2. God's Purpose—v.10**
- 3. God's Provision—v.11**
- 4. God's Pardon—v.12, 14-15**
- 5. God's Protection—v.13a**
- 6. God's Praise—v.13b**

4. God's Pardon—v.12

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² And forgive us our debts...[in other words]:

a. God forgiving us for our sins against Him

Forgiveness is as essential to our emotional man as bread is to the physical man.

However, the greatest forgiveness we need is not *horizontal* (forgiveness from one person to another) it's vertical—God's forgiveness toward us!

But you see, sin causes guilt and guilt is designed by God to lead to repentance and confession—and yet human beings can't live with guilt—so people deal with guilt in one of three ways:

1) They seek to excuse themselves of any wrongdoing by justifying the act and thus side-stepping any feelings of guilt.

2) Do away with God by making themselves God.

Look, if I make myself God then I get to make the rules—rules that always allow me to do what I want without condemning me for wrongdoing.

This does away with guilt because where there are no rules (laws) there can be no sin; and where there is no sin there can be no guilt.

The third way people can alleviate guilt is—the right way:

3) Confessing their sin to God

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is the same idea that Jesus expressed in Matthew 6:12, “***And forgive us our debts.***”

The word ‘**forgiveness**’ basically means ‘*to send away.*’

It is actually a legal term which was used for the *sending away* (the paying off) of a debt.

The reality of this was driven home to every Jew in Israel once a year on Yom Kippur. (Explain)

The Jews regarded sin as a debt owed God—because sin is a crime against God.

When someone has committed a crime against society we call it a *debt*.

After a person has been convicted and has served their time in prison for what they have done we say that they have “*paid their debt to society.*”

All sin is ultimately a crime against a holy God—“*Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight...*” (Ps.51:4a)

The Bible makes it very clear that all of us have sinned, we have all broken God’s law—and therefore, we are all guilty!

People don’t realize that just as we have laws that govern our society, laws that, if broken, must be paid for—so to God has laws that, if violated, must be paid for as well.

God has said in His Word that Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead.

He will judge those who are alive on the earth at His Second Coming before He establishes His Kingdom—if they are believers they will be allowed to enter His Millennial Kingdom.

If they are unbelievers, they will be cast into Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

At that time, He will judge the dead who will be resurrected to stand before Him for the final judgment of all unbelievers. (Explain)

Of course Christians, will be raptured and stand before the Bema Seat Judgment which is not punitive but like the judges seat at the Olympic Games where we will receive our rewards for service to the Lord while we lived on earth.

But getting back to our earlier point, since we've all sinned and are guilty of crimes against a Holy God—there is no defense we can offer.

Romans 3:19 says that since *“all have sinned the whole world is guilty and every mouth silenced.”*

In other words, there is nothing we can say in our defense because God has already declared all of us guilty of breaking His commandments.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God [moral perfection].

Romans 6:23

...the wages of sin is death [eternal death in hell], but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again, in the Jewish mind all sin was looked upon as a debt that was owed to God which is why they brought God an animal as payment.

Under the Old Covenant God provided a sacrificial system whereby the blood of animals could be substituted for the guilty person to atone for their sins.

But that blood was never able, and was never intended, to permanently cleanse away the guilty party's sin.

As the writer of Hebrews explains, "*It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*" (Heb. 10:4).

Those animals were only substitutes whose blood could only temporarily cover sin until Jesus came to offer Himself as the sinless Lamb of God Who alone could take away the sin of the world.

Psalms 103:12 (NKJV)

¹² As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And so, under the fourth part of Jesus' model prayer, **God's Pardon**, the first half of verse 12 deals with God forgiving us for our sins against Him.

The second part of verse 12 deals with:

b. Us forgiving others who have wronged us

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

And then to reinforce the necessity of us forgiving others Jesus actually adds a note of warning in v.14-15:

Matthew 6:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Now what exactly is the Lord saying here?

1) Is He saying that God will only forgive our sins and save us—if we forgive others who have sinned against us. That our salvation is dependent upon our forgiving others who have wronged us?

Is that what Jesus is saying?! No, because—

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Jesus couldn't be teaching that God's forgiveness of us for salvation was dependent upon our forgiveness of others because that would be teaching salvation by works—the work of our forgiving others.

2) It could be that Jesus was saying that an unforgiving heart towards others is an indication that we have not received forgiveness from God ourselves or in other words that we are not saved. (Explain)

3) Thirdly the Lord Jesus could be talking, not about positional forgiveness, but practical forgiveness. (Explain)

As a Christian my practical fellowship with God can be broken through an unforgiving heart while my positional fellowship with Him remains intact.

When I sin my relationship with God isn't lost—but the closeness and intimacy with Him I enjoyed is.

This also works on the horizontal.

Unforgiveness will rob us of the closeness that we enjoy with our family (physical family and church family) and close friends if we don't humble ourselves and forgive them.

But pride can keep us from saying "*I'm sorry, I was wrong.*" Or "*I forgive you*" to the people we love—sometimes for a long time.

And even though we want to ask their forgiveness or tell them we forgive them, often pride hinders us from humbling ourselves—sometimes until it's too late. (Comment)

That then brings us to the fifth category or component of right praying—

5. *God's Protection—v.13a*

Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **And do not lead us into temptation...**

This is a difficult petition to understand because James tells us—

James 1:13 (NLT)

¹³ And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.

And so, if God never leads us into temptation why should we pray to ask Him not to do what He has already assured us in His Word He would never do anyway?

Some have tried to solve this problem by pointing out that the Greek word used here for 'temptation' is *peirasmos* which in Greek is a word that doesn't imply good or evil as does our English word 'temptation' which means to "*seduce or lead into evil.*"

Peirasmos is basically a neutral word—the root meaning has to do with a “*testing or proving*”.

And so, this Greek word could be translated—“*trial*”, “*testing*” or “*temptation*” depending on the context.

And therefore, many conclude that *temptation* can’t be the proper translation since God would never lead us into temptation in the first place so Jesus must be talking about trials here—“*and lead us not into trials...*”

However, that really doesn’t solve the problem either because the Bible says that trials are good for us.

In fact, James tells us—

James 1:2-3 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials [peirasmos], ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance].

And so, if trials are good for us because they strengthen our faith and build within us a steadfast and perseverant spirit why then would Jesus tell us to pray, “*Father...keep us from trials*”?

The only way for us to properly understand what Jesus is saying here is to take all of v.13 as one petition instead of trying to divide it into two separate ones—

Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And do not lead us into temptation—but deliver us from the evil one.

When we do this, we can see that Jesus connects the Greek word *peirasmos* with “*delivering us from the evil one (Satan)*”.

Now the context clearly indicates that Jesus had in mind “temptation” and not “trials” when He told us to pray this petition.

But again, aren't we back to the same problem we mentioned earlier—and that is asking God not to do what He already said He would never do—and that is to lead us into temptation?

Well, earlier, in verse 2 Jesus taught us to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.

Is God going to bring the Kingdom?—Yes, absolutely.

Why should we pray for what God has already said He was going to do? → To keep reminding ourselves that it is coming and not to get comfortable on the earth.

The same is true of praying for what God has said He would *never* do.

Here the thought seems to be that we should constantly be aware of our own proneness to wander and fall into sin.

So, the idea behind, “**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one**” is: *“Lord, keep me sensitive to my own weakness in the flesh. Keep me from thinking that I’m strong enough to resist the temptations of the devil. Lord deliver me from anything that could be used by the devil to take me from You.”*

The phrase, “**deliver us from the evil one**”—“*deliver us*” means, “*Deliver us out of,*” or “*save us from the devil’s temptation*”

The question is—how does God deliver us out of or from the devil’s temptations—and do we have any responsibility in delivering or keeping ourselves from temptation?

First of all, temptation is a reality for all fallen human beings—especially for Christians, because Satan targets us more than anyone else.

We can't avoid or keep ourselves from *all* temptation—but we can greatly reduce the amount that comes into our lives and how we deal with it when it does come calling.

Martin Luther said, *"We may not be able to stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we can sure keep them from building a nest in our hair."*

Translation: *"I can't avoid all temptation because they're flying around everywhere, but I can sure keep temptation from nesting in my head (thoughts) and giving birth to sin."*

James 4:4, 6-10 (NKJV)

⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God...⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: *"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

James lists here several (6) valuable instructions on how we can resist temptation:

1. The battle against temptation starts in the mind with the way you think about this fallen world.

James tells us in v.4 that if you see the world as your friend—if you see this world as something you want to stay close to, then God won't give you the grace to resist temptation because you've already conditioned yourself to be susceptible to it.

1 John 2:15-16 (NLT)

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

2. "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (v.6)

Realize you are no match for the devil or the flesh in your own strength—humble yourself before God and admit it—*“Lord I am helpless to beat this thing! I absolutely need your strength and grace!”*

Remember you can’t use the flesh (self-effort) to defeat the flesh—so don’t fight the flesh feed the spirit.

3. *“Therefore submit to God” (v.7a)*

The Greek word ‘submit’ is *hupotasso*—a military term that means “to rank under”.

In other words, get under the authority of God’s Word and obey what it says—no more excuses; no more selective obedience.

4. *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (v.7b)*

“How do we resist the devil when he comes knocking? By sending Jesus to answer the door”.

“Lord Jesus save me!” and then like Joseph when Potiphar’s wife grabbed him—run for your life! Get out of there.

5. *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (v.8a)*

The best defense against temptation is a good strong offense—make time for God, church, Bible study and fellowship with strong believers in Christ.

6. *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (v.8b)*

Remember once again, it’s your responsibility not to feed your mind with fuel the devil can use against you.

Don’t be double minded—*“choose this day whom you will serve...”*

Repent and then purify your home of anything that can stumble you—get rid of the movies, the cable and internet if you have to.

6. God's Praise—v.13b

Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

¹³ ...For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

So, this little powerhouse of a model prayer ends with an explosion of praise!

Maybe Jesus had this verse in mind when He said this—

1 Chronicles 29:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Yours, O LORD, *is* the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is Yours*; Yours *is* the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all.

In our communication with God there are so many things for us to talk about with Him.

We can and should pray to Him at all times (Psalm 119:169; 1Thessalonians 5:17).

There is no requirement to be standing, sitting, kneeling, or having your eyes closed.

The most important aspect of prayer is to involve God in your whole life by praying to Him at *all* times and for *all* things.

Many Christians have found the acronym **A. C. T. S.** helpful in prayer—the letters stand for:

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (Comment).