

15. The Book of Acts—2:42

(8/12/26)

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.”

This was the fourth pillar of practice that the early church was built upon.

When we talk about prayer—no subject in the Christian life is more important while at the same time more neglected than is prayer.

Fortunately (for all of you) you don't need me to teach you *how* to pray—Jesus did that for us!

In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray—before He taught them the right way to pray, He first warned them against the wrong way to pray.

The wrong way to pray—v.5-8

Matthew 6:5-8 (NKJV)

⁵ "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret

will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

1. “To be seen by men”—v.5

2. “Using vain repetitions”—v.7

And now starting in v.9 and running through v.13 He gives them a model prayer which contains all the basic components of right praying.

I personally don’t believe that Jesus intended this prayer to be prayed verbatim—although it could be used that way as long as you don’t rattle it off with your brain in neutral.

I know for sure the Lord never intended it to be repeated over and over again mindlessly—that would be vain repetition which He condemned the heathens (including the Scribes and Pharisees) for doing when they prayed.

How do I know the Lord was only using this as a model prayer or a template for prayer and not to be used exactly as He gave it?

Because in v.9 He prefaced this prayer with the words, “*In this manner therefore pray...*” not “*in exactly this way therefore pray...*”

I really believe that Jesus intended this prayer to be an ‘outline’ for our prayers to be built around, one which you have to develop and personalize.

This prayer is referred to by many as “*The Lord’s Prayer*,” but “*The Disciples’ Prayer*” would be a more accurate title. (Explain)

Now let’s read the prayer and then we’ll break it down and look at it point by point.

The right way to pray—v.9-13

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

1. God's Person—v.9

a. "Our Father"

When Jesus taught this prayer, He must have shocked His disciples when He said, "*Our Father.*"

The word for "*Father*" is "pater" in the Greek, but many think that Jesus spoke in Aramaic which means He would have used the word "*Abba*," meaning "*Papa*."

Keep in mind that in the Old Testament, God was addressed as Elohim (the Strong One); El Shaddai (the Mighty One); and Yahweh, the unspeakable word that meant, "I AM THAT I AM."

Why did Jesus suddenly say, “*When you pray, call God Daddy, Papa, Abba, Father?*”—was He no longer the Powerful, Unspeakable, Omnipotent God of the Old Testament?

Did God change? No. God didn’t change—we did!

John 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

We were adopted into His family.

If you are truly a child of God, He is still the Unspeakable One, the Almighty One, the Omnipotent One, but because you have been adopted into His family, to you He is also Abba.

But understand that the first thing in prayer is relationship—“*Our Father.*”

You see, if you are not a child of God you have no business praying this prayer.

The good news is that God desires for you to become His child → (Give the Gospel)

b. “In heaven”—v.9

The God I’m praying to is the God in heaven Who has created the heavens and the earth.

This gets into the proper perspective in prayer.

Acts 4:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them...”

This gives us perspective—our Heavenly Father is the God Who created everything—there is nothing impossible for Him.

This is important because so often when we go to pray, we're so overwhelmed by our problem that all we can see *is* the problem.

It just towers over us like a giant and all we can see is the problem and nothing else—no answer, no solution.

But when you begin your prayer, "*O Lord, You are God, You created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them,*" and I look out at this vast universe—then my problem doesn't look so big anymore.

Problems often rob us of our perspective of the greatness of God—prayer helps us to take a few steps back to see everything in the light of God's power restoring a proper perspective of things.

c. "Hallowed be Your name"

"*Name*"—God's name represents all that He is, the sum-total of His character.

Exodus 34:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Jesus, "*Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give to you...*" (Explain)

"**Hallowed**" is a word that has been lost in our language because the concept has been lost from our lives—it means "*holy, separated, transcendent.*"

It is both a verb and a command in the Greek—“*May His name be declared holy!*”

Hallowing God’s name begins in the heart—“*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,*” Peter tells us (1 Pet. 3:15), using a form of the word that *hallowed* translates.

When we sanctify the Lord in our hearts, we will also sanctify or hallow Him in our lives.

Listen, the Father’s name is most hallowed when we behave in conformity to His will.

For Christians to live in disobedience to God is to take His name in vain, claiming as ‘Lord’ someone whom we do not follow as Lord.

Jesus said, “*Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and yet don’t do the things I tell you?*” (Luke 6:46); “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ ” Jesus warned, “will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21).

When we eat, drink, and do everything else to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), that is hallowing His name.

Our prayers should start with God not with us. Not with our needs, or our desires but with the Person of God.

Psalm 100:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.

1. God’s Person—v.9

2. God's Purpose—v.10

a. “Your Kingdom come”

This is the first *petition* of this prayer but notice that it doesn't focus on us or our needs.

Jesus is teaching us here that our first concern should not be our own personal needs—but our first concern should be for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “*Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these other things*” (referring to our needs, what we're going to eat, what we're going to drink, what we're going to wear) “*...and all these other things will be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33).

One author put it this way—

“But how self-centered our prayers usually are, focused on our needs, our plans, our aspiration...etc. We are often like tiny infants, who know no world but the world of their own feelings and wants. One of the greatest struggles of the Christian life is to fight the old sinful habits, with their constant and unrelenting focus on self.”

If prayer is to be effective, we must get our priorities right—the Kingdom of God *first*.

“**Your Kingdom come**” has a two-fold application: 1) Keep spreading the gospel; 2) Keep looking for the coming Kingdom that will be established by Jesus when He returns.

As we look at the world in which we live today, and as we see the problems of our society, we observe the moral breakdown, the anarchy—that should stir our heart to pray— “*Lord, Thy Kingdom come.*”

The word for ‘kingdom’ in Greek is ‘basilea’ and means “rule” or “reign”—therefore what Jesus is teaching us to pray is, “*Father...let Your reign over this world come.*”

The word for ‘**come**’ in the Greek means, “*Let it immediately and suddenly come*”—not “*may it trickle or ooze in gradually over time*”.

The Kingdom of God on the earth will not be slowly brought to pass by electing Christians to political office who then bring policy changes and the enacting of righteous laws which will Christianize the world and eventually usher in the Kingdom.

That belief is called ‘*Christian Reconstructionism*’ or ‘*Theonomy*.’

Jesus never told us to ‘*clean up the fishpond*’—He told us to fish in it!

The Kingdom will come suddenly and completely when and only when Jesus comes again to establish it.

And when He returns to the earth (Rev.19) He will bring judgment upon His enemies and then set up a Kingdom of righteousness and peace—a true theocracy where He will rule over the whole earth from Jerusalem.

Look, it’s hard to imagine that the world in Noah’s day was any worse than it is today.

And just as God’s judgment fell upon the world back then because of their sin, it’s ludicrous to think that His judgment upon this world won’t be coming soon or not coming at all.

His Kingdom is coming and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it—but God is inviting you to be a part of it. (Explain)

We ought to have a longing for the Kingdom of God to come to this earth and replace the evil and corrupt kingdom of man.

The truth is that many Christians aren't really longing for the Kingdom of God because they have built a *kingdom* for themselves on this earth and they're too comfortable and they're having too good a time for the Lord to come now.

b. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

It's been well said—"*Prayer is a mighty instrument—not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth.*" (Explain)

One pastor—

"We have no right to ask God for anything that will dishonor His name, delay His kingdom, or disturb His will on earth".

Ruth Bell Graham has said that she is glad God did not listen to her foolish demands in her younger years, or she would have married the wrong guy fifteen times!

But she ended her prayers wisely by saying, "*Not my will but Thy will be done.*"

Do you trust God when you pray, ending your prayer with, "*Father, not my will but Your will be done*"?

Or do you pray with a demanding tone—"*You listen to me, God. I want this and I won't take 'no' for an answer!*"

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

For us to pray as Jesus taught us, we must believe in the character and wisdom of our Heavenly Father—that He *loves* us and wants to do the *best* for us, and that His will is perfect.

1. God's Person—v.9

2. God's Purpose—v.10

3. God's Provision—v.11

a. "Give us this day"

Give us "*this day*"—why does the Lord want us to pray day by day?

Why can't we just sort of blanket our requests by saying, "*Lord, give us this month our monthly needs,*" or "*Give us this year our yearly bread*"?

The Lord wants us to pray for our daily needs because prayer in and of itself—is our greatest need!

If the Father gave things to us on a monthly basis—we wouldn't pray very frequently.

But rather, He wants us to live in a constant state of dependency upon Him.

The problem with prosperity is it robs us of having to depend on our Heavenly Father each and every day.

We shouldn't feel guilty about the blessings God has given us in this country.

And even though we don't have to pray for our *daily bread*—the idea is to live seeking God for our needs and not indulging all our desires by running up our credit cards.

b. “Our daily bread”

Bread not only represents *food* but is symbolic of all of our physical needs.

Martin Luther understood “*our daily bread*” this way—

“Everything necessary for the preservation of this life is ‘bread’, including food, a healthy body, good weather (they were farmers back then), house, home, wife, children, good government, and peace.”

(Jesus elaborates on this starting in verse 25 and running through verse 34 of chapter 6)

“**Give us this day our daily bread**” is the first *personal* petition which deals with our physical needs.

The *second* petition deals, first of all, with our emotional needs—we’ll call this God’s Pardon:

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.

One author quoted the head of large English mental hospital as having said,

“I could dismiss half my patients tomorrow if they could be assured of forgiveness.” He went on to cite the Scottish churchman George MacLeod as having written, *‘We live in a world where literally thousands of church members [not to mention others] are in need of forgiveness.’*

None of these statements are in the least exaggerated, for in our day, as in all ages of man, people are crying out for real forgiveness and the assurance of it.”

One author relates the following true story—

“The story is told in Spain of a father and his teenage son who had a relationship that had become strained. So, the son ran away from home. His father, however, began a journey in search of his rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in the newspaper. The ad read: ‘*Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father.*’

The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office 800 young men named ‘Paco’ showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness and love from their fathers.”

As I said, forgiveness is as essential to our *emotional* man as food is to our *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!

Listen, forgiveness implies guilt; and guilt implies sin—and sin is the real issue here—man’s sins against Holy God.

Sin is one of the subjects that cause people today to roll their eyes, snicker or become very defensive and offended that we would even imply that they are sinners.

But all forgiveness—especially that which comes from God must start with the recognition of sin—because sin can’t be forgiven until it’s first *acknowledged and confessed* to God.

The Bible says that:

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [sinless perfection]...

1 John 1:8 (NLT)

⁸ If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.

Sin causes guilt and 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.

In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger, one of the world's leading psychiatrists, published a startling book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* He pointed out that the very word *sin* has gradually dropped out of our vocabulary—he said, “*We talk about mistakes, weaknesses, inherited tendencies, faults, and even errors; but we do not face up to the fact of sin.*”

The reason is because sin speaks of wrongdoing and wrongdoing speaks of responsibility—and most people don't want to take responsibility for the wrong they do.

And so, we have side stepped the guilt that comes from sin by playing the victim—excusing ourselves while blaming others for the problems in our lives (problems that are the consequences of our sin).

The second thing people do to alleviate the guilt that comes from sin is to:

2) Do away with God by making themselves God.

The one thing that is bringing God's judgment on this world more than anything else is that man has broken the first and greatest commandment of the Decalogue—

"I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:2-3)—and has deified himself as God.

Lyman Abbot wrote the “Humanist Prayer” (Humanism is the deification of man)—
*“Our brethren who art on earth, hallowed by our name.
Our kingdom come; our will be done on earth for there is no heaven.
We must get this day our daily bread; we neither forgive nor are forgiven.
We fear not temptation for we deliver ourselves from evil.
For ours is the kingdom and the power for there is no glory and there is no forever, amen.”*

And of course, who can forget William Henley's defiant poem of self-deification known as 'Invictus'—

"Out of the night that covers me black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeoning of chance my head is bloody but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade. But yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate, nor how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul!"

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, no 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 by confessing their sins to God which we'll look at next time.