

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer Series: 3

The Prayer Model – Petition [part 1]

Matthew 6. 5-13

Jesus says, as He introduces this teaching on prayer, that we should pray '*in this manner*'. The Greek word *houtos*, used here means 'in this way'. This is a way to pray not a prayer to pray, what Jesus went on to teach are guidelines or principles to direct us as we pray.

This is held up in the previous verses, which are all part of the same thought, that we are not to be like the Pharisees or heathen who:

- wanted to be seen and recognised by men. This is not the motive of prayer. Jesus said that they had already received their reward – the praise of men.
- Made long prayers, with many words, repetitiously saying words and phrases. Again their motive was wrong, prayer is not heard because we use many words, or continually repeat learnt phrases, or in a begging manner - prayers are heard that flow out of the heart in faith.

This pattern is divided into three main areas:

- i. Worship
- ii. Petition
- iii. Praise & Thanksgiving

B. Petition vs11-13

Before we begin to look at these next few verses of the pattern, let us remind ourselves what Jesus said about the the things we petition God for – our needs and desires.

(v8) “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him”

Look what Jesus says here – your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. There are two important things to note here:

- the Father knows the things you need.
 - (a) God already knows what you need – He knows better than you. You may think you know what you need but that may not necessarily be the right thing.
 - [Acts 3.1-8](#) this lame man asked for the things that he thought he needed – money to provide for his family's essential needs.
 - God knew that this wasn't his real need. He needed something greater than the money – he needed healing in his body, he needed self worth, he needed the ability to work and provide for his family. He needed the cycle of poverty broken in his life

- Giving the man what he thought he needed, a few coins, would just perpetuate his need. What he really needed was that poverty spirit broken and the cycle of dependency eradicated.
- (b) He knows the best way to meet those needs.
 - Look at the examples in the Gospels, Jesus didn't always meet the needs of people in the same way. e.g. the blind men, some He just spoke the word to them, others He touched their eyes, one He smeared a type of clay on his eyes and told him to wash in the pool.
- before you ask Him
 - (a) Not only does He know what we need and the best way to meet those needs, He knows before we even ask Him.
 - (b) He puts the desires into our hearts so that we ask Him
 - (c) We will not shock God by the things we ask. When we repent of our sins we will not surprise God by the things we confess – He already knows. When we confess our sin is when we get rid of them.
 - (d) So this leaves some asking the question: 'Since God knows the things we need before we ask Him, why ask Him?'

1. Why Ask Him?

If He already knows what we need, why pray?

i) It's a matter of obedience.

There are many Scriptures that tell us to pray. Actually, three times in this chapter (Matthew 6.5-7), Jesus said 'when you pray'. Jesus expected His disciples to pray, this wasn't to be treated as an optional extra.

We also have Scriptures like

“pray without ceasing” 1 Thessalonians 5.17

“be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God” Philippians 4.6

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” 1 Timothy 2.8

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray....” James 5.13

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*” Mark 11.24

“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation....” Matthew 26.41

“The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest” Luke 10.2

We are given instruction to pray, we must keep that command.

ii) It shows that we trust Him

Even though God already knows what we need and doesn't actually need us to tell Him what it is, when we pray and ask Him to meet that need it shows Him that we trust Him as Provider, as El Shaddai – the God who is more than enough to meet those needs.

iii) God does not respond to need but faith - believing prayer

There are billions of people right across the world in need today and have you noticed, for most of them, God isn't doing anything about their need. He could wipe out all the need with just one blink of his eyelids. God honours the faith of His people.

“When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7.13-14

When there was a need, God expected His people to pray and seek His face. The result of that praying would be removal of the need – forgiveness of sin, healing for the land

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”
Philippians 4.19

Many might quote this verse saying that the Bible says “God will supply the need”, and yes He will, but this statement was made by Paul to a church that prayed, gave and acted in faith (vs 14-18). He said that in response to their faith that God would supply all their need.

How do we know that this was an act of faith? The final words of verse 18 says that their act of giving was “well pleasing to God”. We cannot please God without faith:

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” Hebrews 11.6

We also see in this verse that God rewards those who diligently seek Him – in prayer
When we come to God we must believe that He is (God, Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Rapha, El Shaddai etc - what you need Him to be) and not only that but you must also believe that He will reward that faith, meet that need when you pray.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4.16

We can come to God boldly and in faith to petition Him to meet any need.

iv) Give God something to work with

Do you believe God can do anything?

You hear many people say that God can do anything – to a degree that is true. There are some things that He cannot do – e.g. He cannot tell lies, He cannot break His word, He cannot fail

God is limited! God can do anything within His limitations.

What limitations does God have?

- He will not do anything outside of His Word
- He cannot legally do anything in the earth unless someone gives Him the 'authority'.

John Wesley's statement – “*It seems God is limited by our prayer life – that He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him*”

Let us look at why:

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” Genesis 1.26-27

“What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honour. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all *things* under his feet.” Psalm 8.4-6

- Man was God's best creation – created in His image and likeness
- God gave man dominion over all the works of His hands, all things were put under his feet.

But when Adam sinned and fell, he sold out and surrendered authority to the devil who became 'god of this age/world' (2 Corinthians 4.4; John 12.31) and Adam became a slave to sin (John 8.34; Romans 6.16).

Luke 4.5-8

“...All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish...”

Jesus didn't argue with the devil about the 'ownership' of these kingdoms. If the devil didn't truly own them, he couldn't have used them to tempt Jesus

One of the reasons Jesus came was to defeat the devil and restore the authority, but He had to do it legally. God could not just step into earth and defeat the devil – He had to become man in order to do it. A man needed to get that authority back.

Jesus couldn't just be born, God needed His people, the prophets, priests, kings to speak forth the prophetic word, authorising Him. Everything God does is through words – creation, birth of Jesus, our salvation (Romans 10.9)

When Jesus died he descended into the lower parts of the earth, triumphed over the devil, took the keys of death and Hades and was raised to life having won the victory (and authority). (Ephesians 4.8-10; Colossians 2.15; Revelation 1.18)

God did not say that He was going to dominate through man.

Matthew 28.18

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore....”

When Jesus rose from the dead, having defeated the devil, He gave the authority back to man, His church

Matthew 28.18-20; Mark 16.15-18; Luke 24.45-49; John 20.21-23; Acts 1.4-8;

So we, the church, have been given that dominion and authority – that means that God can't just step in and take over. He needs man to authorise Him – we do that through prayer. We have to give Him something to work with.

“...Yet you do not have because you do not ask” James 4.2

2. For What Are We To Petition God?

“be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God” Philippians 4.6

(a) **Daily Provision of Needs / Petitions** (vs11)

1. This a prayer of dependency. When we pray for God to provide and meet the needs that we have, we are expressing our dependence on Him and not on other external sources. God is our provider, not our jobs, paid work or other people; yes God may use these external sources to meet a need but He is the source.
2. A Prayer for our daily needs. “Give us this day our daily bread”
 - i. In the Scripture that we have just quoted from Philippians, Paul instructed the church not to be anxious about anything. This is a trap we can easily fall into especially when we face needs that can be urgent and pressing. Rather than taking an anxious thought about the need, we bring it God with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, remembering that He is our provider. This is the stress of this pattern prayer.
 - ii. “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*” Mark 11.24
Jesus taught that when we pray, we should believe that we have received. When we receive something like a gift or similar item, we thank the person that gave it. An act of believing that you have already received is to thank the giver, Jesus – thank Him, as though you already have the answer to the need, even when you still can't see it.
 - iii. Don't worry about tomorrow. At the end of Matthew 6.25-34, Jesus taught a lot about the foolishness of worrying about the things we have need of for daily living – food, drink, clothing. He turns our attention to the birds and flowers and shows us that God provides for them and we are of so much more value to Him than they are.
In the last verse we are told not to worry about tomorrow. Our needs today are sufficient for us to pray and supplicate about.

Consider how God looked after the people of old:

- for forty years God fed His people in the wilderness with bread, meat, and water. They never once went without. He kept their clothing from wearing out (Psalm 105.40-41; Deuteronomy 29.5)
- The prophet Elijah was sustained through the years of drought – God charged the ravens with the task of bringing bread and meat to him twice a day (1 Kings 17.6)

3. Blessed to be a blessing. We find it easier to pray for our own needs than the needs of others, this is because there is added responsibility placed upon us when we pray. God has blessed us so that we can be a blessing to others. Part of the pattern prayer is to pray 'what can I do to be a blessing?'. James puts it like this “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” James 2.15-16

There is a promise from Jesus in Luke 6.38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” - this is a divine law, when we give we receive, what we sow we shall reap. A really good way to receive the answer to your need is to be the answer to someone else's need (see also James 5.16 – *middle voice*, i.e. *you yourself*).

(b) **Forgiveness of our sins - Repentance** (vs12)

This part of the pattern, Jesus went on to explain afterwards. It is only through forgiving that we can be forgiven. If we do not forgive then we will not be forgiven (vs14-15)

1. Forgive Us.

- i. Thank God that when we repent of our sins, He forgives us. Notice this is repenting, which is completely different from being sorry. The word repent literally means 'to turn around and go in the opposite direction'.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” 1 John 1.9

- ii. Sin in our heart will hinder our prayers from being heard and answered. “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; nor is ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” Isaiah 59.1-2

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” Psalm 66.18

Sin separates us from God, it causes a barrier in our fellowship with Him – it causes Him to hide His face from us. If we have sinned then we can be assured that God is greater and can forgive us. We need to be forgiven of sin so that we can have confidence in Him when we ask Him about the petitions we want to receive from Him.

“For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

1 John 3.20-22

2. Forgiving Others (vs12, 14-15)

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” Matthew 6.14-15

Hand in glove with receiving forgiveness of our sin is that we also forgive those who have sinned against us. God has forgiven us loads, how can we then not forgive someone who has sinned against us.

- i. Being able to forgive others is a demonstration of the love and compassion of Christ working through us.
“[And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you](#)” Ephesians 4.32
- ii. Unforgiveness is sin. For some people, forgiving others seems to be an impossible mountain to climb. But the Bible teaches us that to be unforgiving or to hold grudges against another is sin itself. We cannot be forgiven if we refuse to forgive others their wrongs against us. This is the key part of this verse in the pattern prayer
We forgive as Christ forgave us – He forgives us as we forgive others. Remember, it's with the same measure that we use that God gives to us (Luke 6.38)
- iii. How often should we forgive?
A question that is raised often is that of someone who continually wrongs you. How often should you forgive them? Peter asked this question of Jesus: “[...Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?](#)” Matthew 18.21
Not just seven times, but seventy times seven! This does not mean that if a brother sins 491 times then he cannot be forgiven. This was to show the love and compassion that we are to show - indefinitely. How many times have we sinned against God? Has He ever refused to forgive us because it was just too many times?
Look what Jesus called the unforgiving man – *wicked* (vs32)

(c) **Protection from the enemy** (vs13)

The last petition that we are instructed to bring in our prayer is to do with protection from the enemy.

1. Lead us not into temptation.
Let us get one thing straight first – God does not tempt us. It is not a sin to be tempted – Jesus Himself was tempted. It becomes sin the moment we yield and give in to it.

So what can we learn from this statement in the pattern prayer.

“[No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it](#)” 1 Corinthians 10.13

- i. Everyone is tempted. No one escapes temptation, it is common to man. The enemy only ever uses three temptations – these are the same three that he used against Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13)
“[For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world](#)” 1 John 2.16

- ii. God does not desert us. When we are tempted God does not desert us, turn His back on us or let us down. He is faithful – He is at our side
- iii. God knows our limitations. He promises that we will never be tempted beyond the power that He gives us. He does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.
- iv. We need to pray before, during and after. When we are tempted we should pray. He helps us and gives us the way out of temptation so we must go to Him for that help.

2. Deliver us from the evil one

Let us remind ourselves that God does not tempt us.

- The devil tempts us in order to knock us down.
- God tests us in order to build us up

“Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone” James 1.13

- i. Christians face a spiritual battle every day. The devil wants to defeat us through temptation. So we pray for deliverance and protection so that we can overcome the temptation.
- ii. How can we overcome temptation?
 1. With the Bible. When Jesus faced temptation, He used the Scriptures against the devil. It is important to read, study and memorise the Word. “Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You” Psalm 119.11
 2. Being humble before God. It is when we think that we are fine and doing well and cannot fall that we are at the most risk. “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” I Corinthians 10.12
 3. Watch and Pray. At one of the most crucial moments in the life of Jesus and the disciples, He told them to be alert and pray. “...He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation'.” Luke 22.40