

THE LORD'S PRAYER

LUKE 11:2-4	MATTHEW 6:9-13
<p>Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.</p> <p>'Give us each day our daily bread.</p> <p>'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.</p> <p>And lead us not into temptation."</p>	<p>Our <i>Father</i> who is in heaven, <i>Hallowed be Your name.</i> <i>Your kingdom come.</i> Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.</p> <p><i>Give us this day our daily bread.</i></p> <p><i>And forgive us our debts,</i> <i>as we also have forgiven our debtors.</i></p> <p><i>And do not lead us into temptation,</i> but deliver us from evil.</p> <p>For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'</p>

INTRODUCTION

In this final session I want to look at what are commonly called the “us petitions”. This is an unfortunate term because it may appear to infer that in the previous “You petitions” the activity is God’s alone whereas, as we saw in the last session, the sanctifying of God’s Name is our responsibility.

Before we launch into the “us petitions” let me remind you of what we dealt with in the last session.

1. God addressed as Father. We saw that the concept of creative tension between ideas is characteristic of Hebraic thought. Therefore God can be the Almighty Ruler of the universe and simultaneously our Father who takes an intimate interest in our lives.

2. Sanctifying the Name. Among other things, this means that we trust the Father by obeying His commandments and making daily choices in the light of His reality. We sanctify God's Name by our holy lives. The essence of this expression in the Disciples' Prayer is beautifully expressed by Jesus' words: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

3. The "*Your-petitions*" are synonymous parallelism.

Synonymous parallelism is one of the most frequently used Hebraic poetic structures in the Bible. The second statement is made to reinforce of the first without making any significant addition or subtraction. One example is Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet. And a light to my path." (NASB)

We move now to the "*Us petitions*".

The plural phrasing — "Give us..., forgive us... lead us" — is characteristically Jewish, focussing on the group rather than the isolated individual as we tend to do.

"*Ten lanu...*, " Give to us!

Many Christians feel a little hesitant about asking for themselves. If we do ask, we often leave the asking until last. Jesus' model for prayer shows none of this self consciousness. Jesus taught us to use the imperative of the verb "give!" when addressing the Father, in the

same way as a child looks to a parent for sustenance, without self consciousness. The asking is in itself an expression of reliance on God which is where repentance begins. This is a preparation for what is to follow.

"Haiyom..," this day

The appeal, however, is qualified by "this day." This is not the scramble for wealth which we see demonstrated by some in the Health and Wealth Gospel community. This is the bread for today. It reflects God's provision of manna in the wilderness. "Each one is to gather as much as he needs... No one is to keep any of it until morning" (**Exodus 16:16,19**).

The rabbis discussed this concept at length.

Exodus 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

Each day that day's portion (Ex 16:4). R. Joshua says, This indicates that a person should gather enough one day for the next, as one [prepares] for the Sabbath on the Sabbath eve." Rabbi Eleazar of Modi'in says, "This indicates that a person was not to gather enough on one day for the next, as one prepares for the Sabbath on Sabbath eve, as it is said Each day that day's portion. He who created the day created its provisions." The Rabbis tended to see manna either as a test of faith or as a special gift to allow the Israelites time to learn the Torah without worrying about their provisions. ¹

"Lechem chukeinu," our daily bread.

This phrase is probably taken from **Proverbs 30:8**, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but provide me with my daily bread (*lechem chuki*). "This was the source of Rabbi Eleazar's saying, "Anyone who has enough to eat today and says, "What will I eat tomorrow?" is one of little faith, as it is said Thus I may test them to see whether they will follow (yelech) My instructions or not (**Exodus 16:4**). [Soṭah 48b]

Jesus said: "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or . . . drink. . . . O you of little faith. . . . Seek first the Kingdom of God, . . . and all these things shall be added to you" (**Matt. 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31**; (compare also Simeon b. Yoḥai, Mek. l.c.; Ber. 35b; Kid. iv. 14).

The focus here is on personal dependence on God for all our legitimate needs as apposed to self sufficiency and self reliance. In what way does this prepare us for the next petition?

"Repentance is despair of self, despairing of self-help in removing the guilt that we have brought upon us. Repentance means a radical turning away from self-reliance to trust in God alone. To repent means to recognise self-trust to be the heart of sin."

EMIL BRUNNER.

"Forgive us ... as we forgive...", which means that our forgiveness of others is the measure of our own state of forgiveness, "for with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

If we cling to resentment, bitterness, or a desire for revenge, we appeal to principles that alienate us from reconciliation with others.

But if we intend to have God be the Judge of others, we appeal to Him to be our own Judge as well.

This petition is the only one Jesus on which gives further commentary (**Matt 6:14-15**) : Forgiveness is conditional upon the willingness to extend the same forgiveness to others who have sinned against us. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) writes to the Colossians reminding them of this principle. **Colossians 3:13** “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

If we merely hear this truth but fail to practice it, we are like someone who looks at their face in a mirror but soon forgets what they saw, thereby exempting themselves from the truth of their own condition (**James 1:22-24**).

If we are unforgiving toward others, we will not be forgiven (**Matthew 6:15**); likewise if we are judgmental toward them, we ourselves will be put on trial; if we are cruel and mean toward them, we will experience life as miserable and mean – filled with darkness. (**Matt 6:22-23**).

This reciprocal principle of Kingdom life appears throughout Jesus' teaching. As you forgive, so you shall be forgiven (**Matthew 6:14**); as you judge, so you shall be judged (**Matthew 7:2**); as you show mercy, so you shall be shown mercy (**Matthew 5:7**); as you give unto others, so it shall be given unto you (**Luke 6:38**).

ve 'al-tevieinu lidei massah, ki- 'im hatzileinu min-hara

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. "

(Matthew 6:13)

מסה

"Massah"

The "Hands of Massah"

Massah comes from a root that means to melt, dissolve, or consume - as by fire that tests the quality of something. As a noun, the word is often translated as "test," "trial," or "temptation," and is directly used to name the place where the children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness (**Ex 17:7; Deut 6:16, Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:7-9**). Significantly, *massah* can also mean "despair," in the sense of "melting of heart," and is usually rendered as mockery or scorn (**Job 9:23**).

When we petition the Father to be "led not into temptation," we are essentially asking to be redirected in our heart's attitude in the face of difficult and trying moments. To fall into the "hands of Massah" means yielding to despair — and to the psychological dissolution that results in bitterness, scorn, and mockery.

Deliverance from *Yetzer Ha ra*

The origin of this despair is what Jewish tradition calls *yetzer ha ra*, or the inner impulse to gravitate toward selfish gratification (idolatry). This concept first appears in **Genesis 6:5** where the wickedness of man is described as "every imagination (*yetzer*) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil (*ra*). " In the New Testament,

yetzter ha ra is called the "carnal mind," the "old nature," or the "natural man."

What do we learn from Paul's Description of his struggle in Romans 7:14-25?

1. We learn that we all have two impulses the *yaytser ha tov* that seeks after God and the *yaytser ha ra* that seeks personal satisfaction often at the cost of holiness.
2. We learn that we all struggle and that this is a normal part of the Christian life.
3. We learn that we cannot rely on, or have faith in ourselves to live holy lives.

(1) There is an intense struggle going on within the Christian.

Conversion to Christ does not instantly solve all our problems. It even results in some problems we had never experienced as unbelievers. Before our salvation, we were never in opposition with sin. We were unknowingly the slaves of sin, all along thinking we were serving our own interests. Before our conversion, we were enemies of God. Our struggle was the result of our opposition to Him and His present judgment in our lives. As a result of faith in Christ, our animosity toward God ended and a new animosity—toward sin—began. The struggle which Paul is describing in **Romans 7:14-25** is the result of his transformation.

(2) An overwhelming sense of despair over our struggle with sin and our defeat by it is an essential step in the

solution to this problem. Paul's despair was legitimate and even necessary. Until we hate sin, we will not turn from it. Until we reach the end of ourselves, we will not look to God. Just as unsaved men and women must come to the end of themselves in order to receive God's gracious provision of righteousness, by faith in Christ, Christians too must come to the end of themselves to find the solution, once again, in the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

(3) The problem with many Christians is not their despair, like that of Paul, but their lack of it. If coming to the end of ourselves is essential to turning to God for our deliverance, then many Christians will never turn to God for victory over sin because they do not recognize their true condition or take it seriously enough. It was the self-righteous among the scribes and Pharisees who did not come to Jesus for forgiveness simply because they did not think they needed it.

"Indeed, an honest and humble acknowledgment of the hopeless evil of our flesh, even after the new birth, is the first step to holiness. To speak quite plainly, some of us are not leading holy lives for the simple reason that we have too high an opinion of ourselves."

John R. W. Stott, *Men Made New*

Why is it I do not feel the struggle as much as he does? How can Christians fail to identify with Paul here in Romans 7? Let me suggest several reasons.

We fail to agonize over sin because we have redefined our old sins, giving them new Christian labels. Aggressive, self-assertiveness, once condemned as sin, now becomes “zeal for the Lord.” These are the same vices, the same sins, but we now sanctify them by putting Christian labels on them.

We may live superficial, hypocritical lives, which deny the reality of our sin, and our failure to live as God requires.

We may ignore and reject God's Law, as though it were for lesser mortal, while we are the ones who are spiritual (the exact opposite of what Paul says in verse 14).

We teach Christians to “cope” with their sin. Paul never teaches Christians to cope. In effect, we say to Christians that they need to learn to live with the agony. Paul says, “No, you don't. You need to have that agony so intense that you **can't** live with it, and you can only turn to God.”

We seek to convert our socially unacceptable sins to those sins which are socially acceptable. We know that robbery and murder are unacceptable to society, and so we redirect our sinful energies in areas which serve our own self-interest, but in ways which bring us the commendation of others, rather than their condemnation. We give up those sins for which society puts men in prison and take up those sins for which society will make us president.

We cannot stand to see people “putting themselves down” and thinking of themselves as wretched creatures, and so

we attempt to build their self-esteem. We would not turn Paul to the cross for the solution to his problem; we would rebuke him for his poor self-esteem, and put him in a class or program which made him feel good about himself. Those of us who are Christians and can identify with Paul are blessed. Those of us who cannot identify with Paul are to be pitied. It is not that we are plagued because we think too little of ourselves, but because we do not take sin seriously enough. The agony of Romans 7 is a prerequisite for the ecstasy of Romans chapter 8.

(4) Sin is complicated, but its solution is simple. Paul has already said it—sin is beyond our comprehension. We do not understand it. We cannot understand it. But we do not have to understand it in order to solve the dilemma it poses.

How great is your struggle? How great is mine? I think if our struggle is as great as Paul's we will in desperation give up all self-help efforts, and we will turn to the cross. God has provided a righteousness we cannot produce by ourselves. That righteousness Jesus Christ offers to us through the power of the Spirit. **"Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** The answer is to come in Romans 8. The very Spirit that raised the dead body of Jesus Christ from the grave is the Spirit that dwells in you and will give life to your mortal bodies. God has the solution. The solution for Christians is the walk of the Spirit. But we will never get to that point until we have come to the desperation of Paul in Romans 7.

“The Scottish scholar James Denney once said that it is impossible at the same time to leave the impression both that I am a great preacher and that Jesus Christ is a great Saviour. In the same way it is impossible at the same time to give the impression both that I am a great Christian and that Jesus Christ is a great Master.” **James Denney**

The Concluding Doxology

Jesus taught us to pray in an entirely Jewish manner. The first three phrases of the so-called "Lord's Prayer" mirror the Jewish Kaddish and the sanctification of God's Name. The middle phrases summarize the essential petitions of the ancient Jewish Amidah prayer, and the climactic conclusion mirrors the praises King Solomon offered at the dedication of the first Temple (**1 Chronicles 29:11-13**). All in all, this is an entirely Jewish prayer given to us by our Jewish Lord and Saviour.

Like most other Jewish prayers, this one ends with the adverb "amen" meaning "truly" or "surely." Amen comes from a root word (*aman*) meaning to nourish, support, and to make sure and strong. The Hebrew word for faithfulness, *emunah*, comes from this same root. The Jewish sages teach that "amen" can be thought of as an acronym for *el melekh ne 'eman*, "God is a faithful King," a phrase said every day before the Shema is personally recited. And indeed the Lord Jesus is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (**Revelation 3:14**)

ENDNOTES

¹ Hammer, R. 1995 *Classic Midrash - Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible*. New Jersey: Paulist Press