

## Praying for Our Need—Not Our Greed

Matthew 6:11; James 1:17

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Greg L. Price

What is a need and what is a want? We have so blurred the meaning of words that many hardly know the difference between a necessity and a luxury. Whatever we want becomes a need we must have.

This is due to the self-indulgent culture in which we live where almost anything we want is found in a store nearby or can be ordered on-line. The poorest around the world that live in shacks and from day to day survive on the food they are able to gather would believe the poorest among us are wealthy; whereas we might think we are barely getting by with a roof over our heads, two cars, a smart phone/computer, and freezers, fridges, and shelves filled with food. It is a greater problem in our nation that people are dying from eating too much (and diseases that come from eating too much) rather than dying from eating too little.

It is not sin (in itself) to have and to enjoy God's material blessings which all come from Him. But we are accountable to God for how we obtain them and use them (1 Timothy 6:17-19). We cannot simply dismiss this passage as having nothing to do with us because we are not "rich". To be rich is simply relative to whom you compare yourself.

As we approach this Fourth Petition in the Lord's Prayer we must reorient our thinking from a want-based prayer to a need-based prayer, from praying for what is coveted for our indulgence to what is needed for God's glory. The main points focus on the words used by the Lord Jesus in this petition: (1) "Give Us"; (2) "This Day Our Daily Bread".

### I. "Give Us."

A. We continue in our study of the Lord's Prayer, and Jesus, the best Teacher that ever lived, is teaching us a lesson on praying.

1. He teaches us not to pray in order to impress others or to multiply words that we do not understand or mean (Matthew 6:6-7).

2. He teaches us to approach Him as our Father who is near us and yet is exalted above all that He has created (Matthew 6:9).

3. He teaches us to plead with Him that His name would be honored above all names and treated as holy (Matthew 6:9).

4. He teaches us to entreat our Father to advance His kingdom of truth and righteousness and to destroy Satan's kingdom (Matthew 6:10).

5. He teaches us to pray that we who are on earth would obey His revealed will (commandments, doctrine, worship) as the angels and church triumphant do in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

B. Whereas the first three Petitions/Requests have focused our thoughts and desires upon God, the last three Petitions/Requests now turn our prayer to consider our own needs—bodily needs, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation and sin. Only when our hearts are humbled before the Lord to see His glory and greatness and to see our smallness before Him are we ready to pray as we should for our needs. When we simply rush into God's presence running through a wish list, we imply that it is more important that we get what we want than we give to Him what He is due—all honor, reverence, love, obedience, and praise.

C. As we examine the words, "Give us" (Matthew 6:11), let us note the following truths contained in this petition.

1. It is not disrespectful for God's children to petition Him for their needs. In fact, Jesus does not frame this petition as a suggestion, but rather in the form of an imperative ("give us"). Not that we are to make demands of God as if we are telling Him what He must do. The imperative expresses not a demand, but our urgency with an exclamation point: "Father, give us what we need!" We not only have a gracious "right" as a child of God to take our needs to Him (our inheritance purchased by Christ), but we have an "obligation" to do so. On the one hand, we are not to be timid about taking our needs to our Father. On the other hand, we are not to manipulate God, or order Him to change His mind. Prayer is intended to change us not to change the unchangeable God that we might out of a heart filled with love submit to His will even in lifting our needs to Him.

2. "Give us" makes clear who is helpless and dependent (us), and who is sovereign and good (God). He has given us all that we have (James 1:17). We are the ones in need, not God. Even this petition for our bodily needs must be God-centered; for it acknowledges that we would have absolutely nothing if God did not give to us what we have. If we do not believe that, we are deceived (1 Chronicles 29:13-14).

3. "Give us" is not selfish and self-indulgent so that we might spend what is given on our own mere pleasures and comforts. We pray "give us" in order that we might have life, breath, and strength to hallow His name, to advance His kingdom, and to do His revealed will. That is the purpose for praying for what we need—that we might glorify Him. When you bring your needs to the Lord in prayer, how often does it enter your mind that your health is not for your comfort first and foremost, but for His glory/honor? Everything you receive in life is a special gift to you from your Father (every bite of food, every sip of clean water, your measure of health, every breath you take, every beat of your heart, your family, home, car—everything). You would not have it if God had not given it.

4. If everything is a gift from God, we deserve nothing we have. What we do deserve is God's just condemnation for sin, but what He gives us is His mercy, love, and good gifts (materially, but especially spiritually). If everything is a gift from God, why are we (to our shame) so filled with pride over what we have (1 Corinthians 4:7)? Instead, it is, "I took this business from nothing and made it what it is"; "I wisely invested that money"; "I trained my children"; "I exercised and ate right". It is because of such pride that God often takes that about which we boast from us (like Nebuchadnezzar). We are not denying second causes or the means God uses to give us what we have, but even those means (of strength, knowledge, ability, hard work) are gifts from God which He has ordained for our good ("who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" Ephesians 1:11). We can only be assured that pride is being crucified within us when our hearts are filled with thankfulness to God for all that He has given us rather than filled with pride in boasting of our successes and accomplishments. Pride is robbing God of that which belongs to Him (whether in our thoughts or words).

## II. "This Day Our Daily Bread."

A. It is clear that this petition calls upon our good Father to meet our NEED, not to meet our GREED (as someone has said).

1. Bread represents the necessities, not the luxuries of life (food, clothing, shelter, work, transportation, health) in order that we might have the strength to advance God's kingdom. If seeking our needs has no higher goal than to sustain our life, then we are not praying as Christ taught us to pray.

2. It's "bread" that is prayed for, not sirloin; it is dependable, affordable transportation that is prayed for, not a luxury car; it is work that is prayed for, not ease and comfort; it is a measure of health that is prayed for, not heavenly health; it is the necessities of life that is prayed for, not wealth and riches. In fact, Solomon warns us against praying for wealth (Proverbs 30:7-9). Likewise, Paul cautions believers about the temptations and problems that come to those who have all that they want (1 Timothy 6:9-10). These are inconvenient truths for the false prophets/charlatans who preach their false gospel (a "prosperity gospel").

Yes, Solomon was wealthy (as were other saints in Scripture). It is not wealth that is sinful. It is the love of wealth and living for it rather than for Christ that is sinful (Philippians 1:21).

3. Should those of you who own businesses not pray for God's blessing to bring more clients which in turn brings more money? Should you who are employed by someone not pray for advancement and promotion in the company? Of course, you should take all these matters to the Lord and seek His blessing (whether that means financial gain or financial loss, promotion or demotion). It is not the financial gain, advancement, or promotion that is sinful. It is the love of those things that is sinful. It is looking for your contentment and joy in the things of this world rather than in Christ. If you cannot be content and enjoy what God has already given to you, you will not be content if He gives you what you want (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

4. Discontentment springs from covetousness (wanting what you do not have, which Paul says is idolatry, Colossians 3:5). Discontentment is certainly never satisfied with mere bread—it cries out, "More, more, more—it is not enough." Discontentment breeds misery—a misery that we sinfully chose to live in because we will not learn contentment (Philippians 4:11-13). Discontentment does not want to see and acknowledge all of the blessings God has already given because that would mean we would have to express thankfulness to God and could not complain as did the children of Israel in the wilderness (who had been set free, but could not enjoy their liberty because of their unthankful and discontented hearts). Is it not time to repent of our sin of discontentment and take it to the cross of Jesus to be crucified?

B. "This day our daily bread" calls us to live each day as if we had no extra money for tomorrow's needs, as if we had no freezer, fridge, or shelf with extra food for tomorrow's needs, or as if we had no work to cover our expenses for tomorrow.

1. This is very hard for us when we have not only in our homes, but in many stores, so much abundance. We have to re-train ourselves to think in terms of God daily providing for all that we need; for nothing that we have is guaranteed to us tomorrow. All that we presently have could be taken quickly from us (as with Job).

2. Lockdowns, the collapse of the economy, the crashing of the stock market, closure of stores, power grid shut downs, supply chains broken are all possibilities. That is not intended to strike panic in your heart, but simply to show you in whom your trust must be every day. It is good to prepare and store food, to have back-up power systems, to have a good source of water, to save money, and to provide for your health and safety (as Joseph prepared for the 7 years of famine by storing the abundance of the 7 good years); but dear ones, your confidence cannot be in those earthly means, but must be in God at all times, every day. None of your back-up plans will work without God's blessing.

3. We must live as dependent upon our God daily as if we were the widow of Zerephath (1 Kings 17:14-16). This is trusting in the promise of God (Philippians 4:19).

C. Remember that your Father is good (always good) and remains good even when He withholds from you that for which you ask.

1. You may even believe what you have brought before Him is a need. He knows your every need (Matthew 6:8). You have His promise that He will only give to you what is good (Matthew 7:11).

2. If He does not give you what you think you need (like Paul who prayed three times to be delivered), you must fall into the loving arms of your Father, and pray through your tears, "Jesus is enough" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus is all that you truly need, regardless of what you have or don't have. Whether you have much, little, or nothing—Jesus is enough. If He brings losses or gains—Jesus is enough. Whether you face wealth or poverty—Jesus is enough. Whether you enjoy health or endure illness—Jesus is enough. Whether blessings come your way or trials knock you down—Jesus is enough. Jesus is your contentment and joy now and for all eternity. The whole world will not satisfy you without Jesus; but even a piece of bread will satisfy

you with Jesus.

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