

Lesson 3

The Pattern of Prayer

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Humanity has made such tremendous strides in technology within the last hundred years that man has become enamored with his own intelligence. The result of all this wisdom is that man has overestimated his natural abilities and played down the need of God in his life.
- B. Most men are denying outwardly or seriously questioning the whole idea of God and the supernatural. The Bible tells us that the supernatural world is more real than the natural world, but the vanity of man denies that which God says is true.
- C. The lack of emphasis upon the supernatural can be most clearly seen in the concept of prayer. This naturalistic philosophy has rubbed off on many Christians, for they try psychology, psychiatry, sociology, etc., before they go to prayer to ask for supernatural help from God. But the opposite should be true; Christians should go to God first and then use whatever human means are available to solve a problem. POINT: The naturalistic, humanistic spirit of our age has greatly tainted Christian thinking.
- D. God has told us about the importance of prayer and Jesus Christ has set forth for us the pattern of prayer in what the Christian world calls “The Lord’s Prayer,” or “The Disciples’ Prayer.”

II. THE LORD’S PRAYER (Luke 11:1-10; Matt. 6:5-15)

- A. There has been no small controversy in some Christian circles over the use of the Lord’s Prayer. There are three basic views:
 1. For Israel: Those holding this view are strict dispensationalists who feel that the kingdom mentioned in this prayer is for Israel only. Therefore, this prayer should never be prayed by those who are members of the Church. The real Lord’s Prayer is found in John 17.
 2. Application to the Church: These are dispensationalists that see the Lord’s Prayer as for Israel but think that by application it can be prayed by the Church because there are many principles that apply to both dispensations.
 3. For all Christians: The Lord’s Prayer can and should be prayed and used as a pattern for prayer by all Christians who are waiting for Christ to establish His Messianic Kingdom on this earth. POINT: This is the more correct view.
- B. Another controversy is over when and how the Lord’s Prayer should be used. Some think it should be prayed in public and others think it is just a pattern of prayer. However, the Bible seems to indicate that it may be repeated publicly (Luke 11:2—“When you pray, say”) or it may be used as a pattern of prayer (Matt. 6:9—“After this manner”). NOTE: Do not become critical of those who repeat the Lord’s Prayer publicly or privately. Christians should not be reactionaries because they have had bad experiences with the Lord’s Prayer in liberal churches. This prayer covers everything in principle. It is a comfort to

know that whatever a Christian has forgotten in his private prayers he can cover in principle by repeating the Lord's Prayer.

III. OUR NEED OF PRAYER (Luke 11:1)

- A. The disciples wanted to know how to pray. They had obviously prayed before but they wanted Christ to teach them that they might be effective in prayer. So it was asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." NOTE: Effective prayer does not come naturally or else our Lord would have never had to teach on the subject.
- B. It takes time to learn to pray well. Someone has said, "Prayer works, prayer is work, prayer leads to work."
- C. Every Christian has a great need to be taught by Christ to pray effectively. Montgomery says,

*"Lord, teach us how to pray aright,
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight,
We may, we must draw near.
Give deep humility; the sense
Of godly sorrow give;
A strong, desiring confidence,
To hear Thy voice, and live."*

I. OUR MOTIVES IN PRAYER (Matt. 6:5-8)

- A. Beware of Hypocrisy (6:5): There are many, especially religious leaders, who pray to impress men. They have the externals of religion but no heart reality. There are many hypocrites in the Church but they shall have their reward at the final judgment in which they will be found guilty before God and illegitimate children of God.
- B. Beware of the Flesh (6:6): There is something inside of all men that wants the praise of men. We pray eloquently in public because we want folks to think us spiritual, mature, or great prayer warriors. But God says the real prayer warriors are those who have learned to pray to the Father in secret. For those who grasp the power of secret prayer, there will be great reward in time and in eternity.
- C. Beware of Ritual (6:7): When men are praying, they are not to pray with vain (thoughtless) repetitions, for this is the practice of pagans. Prayer, not flowing from the inner man, can become ritualistic and meaningless. Pagans pray this way. Some Mohammedans spend six hours in prayer a day and they do it by repeating over and over again, "There is no God, but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of God." There are many Christians also who have ritualistic prayer. You may have heard of the old Christian farmer who prayed daily, "Lord, I pray for me, my wife, my son John, his wife—us four and no more!" NOTE: The danger of repeating the Lord's Prayer in public is that it can become purely ritualistic with no meaning.

- D. Beware of Becoming Stereotyped (6:8): It is quite possible for a Christian to fall into the pattern of the unsaved world or to take up the compromising habits of a carnal church. But Christ says, “Be not ye therefore like unto them.” Why be different? Because God knows our needs before we even ask. POINT: Our Heavenly Father longs to meet our needs if we will but ask Him and trust Him to do it, not trying to gain merit from God, not trying to impress Him. We are to come to Him as our Father to ask Him for blessing.

II. OUR PATTERN FOR PRAYER (Matt. 6:8-13)

- A. Prayer for the Kingdom (6:9-10): The disciples were looking forward to the kingdom that would be set up on this earth (whether in the millennium or eternal state) where God would reign supreme. The earthly kingdom did not come with Christ’s first advent but will come in His second advent. Until God establishes the kingdom, Christians are to pray in a certain pattern.
1. Acknowledgment (“Our Father which art in heaven”): Christians are to acknowledge the existence of God and “practice His presence.” He is a God who is really there, who really acts in history, and who really cares for men. He is not only transcendent (far off) but He is immanent (very near).
 2. Adoration (“Hallowed be thy name”): Literally this says, “Let thy name be holy.” He is a holy God; thus, we are to respect and reverence the God who is there. POINT: If God is holy, then Christians should also be holy, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16), and shine as lights in the world until God sets up His kingdom. There is danger of rushing into God’s presence with our wants but we must begin by worshipping Him before we state our own needs. We should be concerned about His honor and glory and holiness and remind ourselves of His majesty and greatness and power. Prayer is speaking to God, forgetting ourselves, and realizing His presence. When this is done we contact God. NOTE: We must always treat God with respect, for this is basic to acknowledgment of His holiness. If we treat God like a king, then He will treat us like respected servants! It is related of Alexander the Great that on one occasion a courtier asked him for some financial aid. That great leader told him to go to his treasurer and ask for whatever amount he wanted. A little later, the treasurer appeared and told Alexander the man had asked for an enormous sum, and that he hesitated to pay out so much. “Give him what he asks for,” replied the great conqueror. “He has treated me like a king in his asking, and I shall be like a king in my giving.” How like God this is! Christians should have a burning desire for the whole world to bow before God in adoration, in reverence, in praise, in worship, in honor, and in thanksgiving. This will find complete fulfillment when Christ sets up His kingdom on earth (Isa. 29:23, Ezek. 36:23).
 3. Realization (“Thy kingdom come”): As soon as the Christian begins to sanctify God’s name on earth, he meets opposition from Satan’s kingdom of darkness. Satan is the god of this world, but we should pray for Christ to set up His kingdom. Literally, this says, “Let thy kingdom come.” Christians are to realize that God has a plan for this world and this plan will be consummated when the kingdom is established. The kingdom has come spiritually in the hearts of all who have acknowledged Christ as King. Yet, the day is to come when the kingdom shall be established on earth and Christ shall reign over the world. We are to pray that God will hasten the establishing of this

future kingdom because the nearness of the kingdom means that the second advent of Christ is not too far distant, for Christ must return before the kingdom can be established.

4. Submission (“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”): Literally this says, “Let thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” As children of the King and participants in the future kingdom, Christians are to pray for God’s will to be done on earth until the kingdom is established. When it is, God’s will shall be done perfectly. Christians doing the will of God now are preparing this world for the future kingdom. The world gets a taste of the kingdom by observing Christians.
- B. Prayer for Needs Until the Kingdom (6:11-13): Until God establishes His kingdom, the children of the King will have to have certain needs met.
1. Physical (material) Needs: (“Give us this day our daily bread”): We are to pray that God will meet our needs day by day. We are to pray for needs, not luxuries. (If some luxuries come, that will be wonderful, but we should not be disappointed if they do not come.) Praying this is believing that God will take care of us because we are His children. He is interested in the minutest details of our lives. NOTE: The folly of the twentieth century is thinking that because of our scientific knowledge we do not need God to provide for us. Without rain and sunshine we could not live a day. Our health, our very existence, is in His hands.

One time a lady came to Dr. G. Campbell Morgan and said, “Oh, Mr. Morgan, I have a big prayer request because I have a big need.” He quietly leaned over to the lady and said, “Is there anything big in God’s sight?”
 2. Sociological (personal) Needs (“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”): This is not speaking about salvation but about sanctification. We have need for daily cleansing from sin, for we must be right with God before we can be right with others. There is a great need to know how to forgive others and to love others. “. . . bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you” (Col. 3:13). If we are not willing to forgive others, God will not bless us as His children. Positive human relationships are basic to genuine Christianity.
 3. Protective (spiritual) Needs (“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”): Christians are in constant struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Temptation is all about, and Christians, more than anyone else, understand the dangers of sin and the need for prayer that God will protect them, even from temptation. Protection from sin is necessary because sin affects our daily fellowship with the Father. Our supreme desire should be to have a right relationship with God, to know Him, to have uninterrupted fellowship and communion with Him.
- C. Prayer for the Anticipation of the Kingdom (6:13): Until the kingdom comes, Christians know that the kingdom belongs to God and that all power and glory also belong to Him. Thus we are to live in anticipation of the kingdom yet to come.

III. OUR PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER (Luke 11:5-10)

- A. Apparently when our Lord had finished instructing His disciples on the pattern of

prayer, he told them the parable of the importunate friend. In this parable we are told the importance of repeatedly and continually asking the Father for our needs. God takes delight in our persevering prayer.

Sir Walter Raleigh once made a request of the Queen, and she petulantly answered, "Raleigh, when will you leave off begging?" Sir Walter replied, "When your Majesty leaves off giving," and his request was granted. The God of all grace never grows weary of our asking and never rebukes us for coming.

- B. This parable about persevering in prayer was given after the instruction on the pattern of prayer because our Lord knew how easy it is to have head knowledge about prayer but never apply this knowledge to experience. POINT: God longs for us to know how to pray and then to actually pray, for He desires to meet the needs of His children.