

Glorifying God Through Prayer

Luke 11:1-13

Kevin Laser, May 20, 2018

Good morning. It's good to see you. This is an honour for me, a real privilege to be able to be before you, and to share the Lord's Word. I think this is one of the great privileges of a Christian, is to be able to take God's Word and to share it with others; whether they're a non-believer, and they need to hear the Gospel for the first time, or whether they're a seasoned believer, a mature believer, and they need to be reminded of the basics of the Gospel, and the basics of loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we're going to have the opportunity to learn to pray. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. And thankfully, He preserved that prayer in the Bible for us. And that's what we're going to do today.

One of the basic things about the Christian life is prayer. It's absolutely basic, it's foundational. It's foundational to a healthy Christian life. Two foundational disciplines are part of the Christian life. The first is studying God through His Word. And secondly, talking to Him through prayer. And so today, we are going to talk about praying.

In fact, as a Christian, it was probably the first thing that you did. You confessed to God that you were a sinner. You recognized that you had broken His law. You understood that your way was on a path of destruction, and you called out to God, "God save me. God rescue me. God, I need to change my life. I want to repent." Perhaps that was the very first thing you did as a Christian, is talk to God in prayer.

Your prayer, I'm guessing was not recited from memory. It was not necessarily pre-planned. It wasn't scripted. It was from the heart, wasn't it? It was something that was from faith. And as a result, you became a new creature in Christ Jesus. You were made new. Out with the old, in with the new. You once lived on your own terms, I did too. We all did. And the guilt and the burden of our sin was heavy upon us. But you prayed and your soul drank from the forgiveness and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as you grew spiritually, you learned that prayer is important. It's how we communicate with our Creator. And how we tell Him that we're thankful for all that He's done in our life. Especially for saving us. Eventually, you realized that prayer can be difficult though. And on one hand, prayer is a privilege, and on the other hand, it is a discipline. It takes effort. It takes focus, doesn't it? And eventually, I imagine that you came to the point in your life as I have, where we desire as the disciples did and we ask the same question of the Lord, that the disciples asked. "Lord, teach us to pray, teach me to pray."

Have you ever wondered, "How should I pray? What should I do? Should I stand? Should I sit? Should I kneel? Should I close my eyes? What words should I use? Oh my prayers, they're not as good as so and so. I could never speak like so and so. What should I say? Should I start like this? How do I end?" All those different things.

Well, that's what we're going to look at today. Jesus gives us the instruction, in a sense, the manual, the set of ingredients, to know how to pray. Unfortunately, many have taken this prayer that we're going to look at today and taken it to be something merely to memorize and to recite simply when it's time for a prayer. And for those who have taken the prayer this way, who have merely ticked off that they've prayed by reciting this particular prayer, they're actually missing out on what Jesus was teaching.

On the surface, it may appear like this prayer is perhaps a magic bullet, "Just recite it and that's good. We can move on. Just memorize it. Say it when it's time to pray and you're covered." But that would be missing the entire point. What is the point of Jesus' prayer? What was He trying to accomplish? What was He trying to teach you and me in this prayer? Jesus is teaching us basically what ought to be in our prayers. You see, it's sort of like a set of ingredients, that when mixed together make for a healthy prayer life that actually glorifies God. He shows us what the focus is, what the elements are to be in the prayer, and what our attitude is in our prayer.

God has given us the gift of prayer. And I highlight the word "gift", because it truly is a gift. Would you not consider it a gift to be able to have ten minutes to speak to somebody in this world that is of great honour, of great power? Perhaps, you would. But for most people in this world, they'd say, "Yeah, that would be great if I could have half an hour to spend with so and so." Whoever that important person is that you think is in this world that's important. That would be a gift, wouldn't it, if they were to invite you, to say, come, and speak, you've got a half an hour. Well, we have the gift of being able to talk to the Lord any time, for as long as we want. We're not limited to a half an hour.

And consider who this gift is from. It's from our heavenly Father. It's a gift to talk to our Creator about anything, about all things, for as long as we want. And yet, He has graciously taught us how to pray. He has not simply given us the gift and said, "I hope you figure it out." But He said, "Here is how to pray."

He gave us a perfect model that includes all the ingredients of a healthy prayer life. Remarkably, consider this: if you were to teach somebody how to pray, how would you teach them? Look here, how Jesus taught us how to pray. Because remarkably in Luke here, it's an amazingly short prayer. It's only 37 words in the English language, in the NASB version. Now Matthew, takes it a little bit further. He makes it more liturgical, and it's 67 words. But this short prayer of 37 words is all we need of the foundation to pray.

It's sort of like a skeleton. All the other stuff that's in it, is sort of like the meat that hangs on it so to speak. Amazingly, it is simple, yet it is packed with depth and riches. It's full and it's complete. It's yet simple enough for a child. It's short and easy to understand and yet it provides the seeds necessary for prayers of any person. It's the perfect model prayer for both a young child, and the seasoned scholar. It points us in the direction that our prayers ought to take from the day that we are saved until we have become old with spiritual maturity, hopefully.

I invite you to join me now in drawing nearer to God as we actually learn how to pray for the glory of God. "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished,

one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught His disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray, say.' Would you stop there for a moment.

You see, Jesus set the example of prayer for His disciples. Jesus often prayed and He made time to pray. He recognized that each day He needed, and He desired to spend intimate fellowship with His Father. The disciples saw that prayer was a top priority for Jesus. In fact, He often woke up early to pray, sacrificing sleep. They watched, they observed, and they came to realize that they too needed to learn to pray. And who better to learn from than Jesus, the God Man.

You don't need to look up these verses, but in Luke 5:16, it says, "Jesus would often ..." and I quote the word "often", "slip into the wilderness to pray." It was His habit, it was His pattern, it was His routine. It was a priority for Him. He wanted to seclude Himself, to spend the intimate moments with His Father.

Luke 6:12 says, prior to choosing His Twelve Disciples, "...He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God." He would have long times of prayer often, because He knew the importance of spending time with the Father. It wasn't just about short quality (and I'm not saying short quality is bad), but He knew the value of that quantity as well.

Luke 9:28-36, Jesus went with Peter, John and James to the mountain to pray. And He was teaching His disciples to pray, and they stayed up there in the mountain until the next day. And this was when the Transfiguration happened. Through this time of prayer, it actually led them to get a glimpse if I may say, of heaven. Jesus knew how to pray and He prayed often. So, who better to learn to pray from than Jesus Himself?

Take a look at verse two, "And He said to them, 'When you pray say, "Father, hallowed be Your name."'" Matthew, which records this prayer as well, He says, "Pray then, in this way." So, He's not saying necessarily we need to pray these exact words, but He's saying, "Pray in this way. This is the manner, this is the fashion. This is what we need to remember to include when we pray."

And He begins with one simple word that is a beautiful word. And that is "Father". He is not only our Creator, who oversees our life and sustains us but He is our Father. In that, we are adopted by Him. Romans 8:15 is a beautiful verse that says, "That we have received the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out 'Abba Father!'" We have believed Him, and therefore, He has received us. We are in a loving relationship with Him, and we have confidence to approach Him on His throne. We have been sought after, and He has redeemed us. He is the one that we can trust. And it is a term of intimacy. We are born of Him, and therefore, we can rightly call Him Father. Praying to God includes the joy of intimacy. And that's how Jesus being God, starts us off on this model prayer. He loves and He cares for us perfectly and reminds us that we are part of His family.

On the flipside, do you remember how things used to be? There was enmity between us and God, wasn't there? We were hostile toward God. In fact, the Bible says that we hated God. And it was said of us, that the devil was our father because we were doing the will of the devil. And now, here in this prayer, Jesus says, to start our prayer by recognizing the intimacy of our relationship

with Him. And we can call Him our Father. And He is a perfect Father. He is the standard, if I may say, of fatherhood.

When we call Him Father, we are acknowledging that we are born of Him. We are of Him, and we are aligning ourselves with Him and His ways. Although we were once hostile and at enmity with God, we've become part of His family and we have been reconciled to Him. Where we once were outside of the family, we are now of the Father and in the family. We profess to be His children by faith in Christ.

In calling God our Father, we are acknowledging that His ways are right, and we want to do things His way. We are proclaiming that we are made new creatures by Him in Christ Jesus. In stark contrast to all the other religions, because they worship mute, mindless, deaf, created false gods. But we worship the living God, who created us and we have a close, loving relationship with Him.

Note, that we are not to pray to angels. We are not to pray to the saints of old. We are not to pray to deceased loved ones. We are not even to pray (as many do in this world) to Mary, the physical mother of Jesus. We are to pray to God alone. Because He, alone is God, to His glory. It is to His glory and to our good to pray to our heavenly Father, who is loving caring, and intimate.

He begins by saying "Father", but then look at the next three words in verse two there. "Hallowed be Your name." "Hallowed" is a word that has sort of fallen out of society these days. We don't use it, we don't typically hear it. But it's a really important word. "Hallowed" carries the idea of marked separateness. It basically comes from the Greek word *hagiozo*. And it means to "render or to treat as holy", "to set apart", "to devote", "to consecrate".

You see, God is in a sphere or a category you could say, that's all His own. There's nobody in that category. There's nobody in that sphere. He's outside of creation, and there's nobody else outside of creation. Everything in creation is finite, yet everything about God is infinite. It's inexhaustible. He's pure and yet we are sinful, are we not?

Our desire is to make Him known and glorified. We want to hallow His character and His attributes. We want to hallow His name. To proclaim His name, Him, to be the supreme one in our heart, and in the world. He is above all creation, and because He is above all creation, He is worthy of all glory. All Creation was made for Him to be glorified. God's glory is the first and the all-encompassing thing that we should desire.

And do you notice how Jesus put this at the top of the prayer, not at the end? But He put it right at the top. "Father, hallowed be Your name." It sets the tone and the agenda really, for the rest of the prayer. It's the chief thing that we should seek. Even Jesus, when praying about His agonizing death that was pending, in John 12:28, He said, "Father, glorify Your name." Though His obedience resulted in death, Jesus set His sights really ultimately, on the glory of the Father.

So, my question is, what can we praise and worship God for? His worth, His greatness, His holiness. There's an endless list of things that we should exalt Him for. Consider this: His power. He made everything in six days. How long does it take us to clean our house? To really get to the

deep cleaning? How long does it take us to do whatever the job is? Plant the garden? How long does it take us to finish the project at work? Or to get the project going? Or to solve the problem that's come up in the project? God had it all planned. He did it, and He put it in motion perfectly right from the beginning. Consider that. Ought we not to hallow His name?

But then consider His creative powers when it comes to you and me. We were dead, folks, dead, spiritually dead, spiritually hostile towards God. He took us while our fists were up toward God, and He redeemed us. He created us to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. Isn't that a marvellous thing? Let's praise Him, let's worship Him for that.

Let's praise Him and let's worship Him and hallow His name for the fact that He is holy. He's absolutely pure and He's in a category of His own (like I mentioned before) above all creation. He is just, fully impartial, and He judges righteously. He is loving. God is love. His love is so great that while we were sinners, He came and He died for us. And He is a God of long suffering. He's also a God that is perfectly compassionate. He's moved with pity to such a degree that He personally paid for our infinite debt that we owed Him. A debt that I knew I could never afford to pay.

He is faithful. Have you ever said, "Hey, I'm going to do this" or "I'm going to do that," and then you realize about a week later that, "I never did that?" And you totally forgot? He is faithful, He never forgets to do what He says. Everything that He says, He does fully and perfectly. Let's hallow His name for His faithfulness. He has done miracles. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Read the Old Testament. He is a God of miracles. The Bible is chalked, full of miracles, where God has purposely intervened in people's lives to bring Himself glory for their good.

He is a God of wisdom. He always knows what is best. O, how I wish I had that, to always know what is best; to have all the information, to bring it together and to say, "This is the course of action we need to take." But consider this, not only is God a God of wisdom, and He can do that without a single piece of extra effort, but He says, "Come to Me for wisdom and I will give it to you generously."

Consider His grace, the fact that though we have started our life with our fists up toward God, we are in a position of unmerited favour. And His grace is sufficient, never ever lacking. Consider His omniscience. He knows everything, and nothing escapes His knowledge. Nothing escapes His understanding. He is good. His goodness is in everything. His truthfulness. Everything He says, 100% is trustworthy.

And then, He is the same yesterday, He is the same today, and He is the same forever. He's not changing. He's not fickle, where a thousand years ago, He was like this, and now He's something different, or now He's not merciful. He's not fickle. He's always the same; yesterday, today and forever. Perfectly holy in all of these areas.

And then the last thing in my short little list, is that He sustains all things. And I say "short" because there are so many other things to praise and worship God for. Consider what God said of Himself in Ezekiel 38:23. He says, "I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself

known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the Lord.” When we come to God in prayer and He says, “Hallow His name,” and we hallow His name, we are participating in giving God the glory that He deserves. Because He alone is worthy of it.

Consider this one example of praising God that is actually occurring right now in heaven, as we sit here. It says in Revelation 4:8-11,

8 And the four living creatures, each of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Lord Almighty, who was and is and who is to come.” 9 And when the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they will cast their crowns before the throne saying, 11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for you created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and they were created.”

Three words I want to draw your attention to, “worthy are You”. May we be a church that when we pray, we sit and enjoy those moments to hallow the name of our Father. To hallow Him is to praise Him, to worship Him with our words. But it's not even limited to our words, it's with our actions. It's even with our attitudes. It's everything about us. Because we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, all of our strength. To hallow Him is not simply “I said it.” It's a way of life. That includes the privilege of saying it.

If our prayers are to glorify God, they need to be God-centered. And yet, it's easy to slip into a pattern of this man-centeredness, rather than a God-centered prayer. Man-centered prayers tend to ask, “How can God help me with my problems? How can God change my situation? How can God make things more comfortable and better for me? And so on and so on.” Basically, the attitude is one of, “How can God serve me?”

But God-centered prayers consider it differently. What is God doing in this world and in my life? How can I join in God's purposes? How can I give glory and pray to His glory? I can desire to, I should desire to come alongside God and be part of fulfilling His purposes. This changes not only the way we pray, but also what we pray for. A key ingredient to a healthy prayer life is including praise and worship.

First, He deserves to be praised, as we already mentioned. But secondly, praising Him glorifies Him, and it is for our good. I want you to consider this because we might think praising Him is obviously good for Him, He deserves it. But it's actually good for you. As we remember how great He is, we are reminded of whom we serve. It actually serves to provide us with hope and encouragement as we think about our needs and our struggles. If we remember that He is almighty, that He is good, He is merciful, full of grace and He hears our prayers, and that He is intimately and compassionately involved in our lives, it will remind us and encourage us that He is powerful to answer our prayers, and to provide for our needs, it will strengthen our heart. And you know what? It may be the very grace you need. Praising God keeps our attention on Him, and it works for our good.

Here's a few examples of how we can praise Him, by looking at some of the characters in the Bible. Consider for example, Joseph of the Old Testament. He had brothers who hated him, he was despised. He was sold, they wanted him dead. They intended evil for him. And yet, Joseph said, "Do not be afraid for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil for me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about His present result, to preserve many people alive." In situations in life where it seems like all is lost (because I'm sure Joseph at times felt like that), we can remember that God is accomplishing some good.

As we think of wisdom, consider the wisdom that God gave to Solomon. Again, we kind of referenced this before, but with regard to wisdom, we want wisdom. We need wisdom, we need to know how to make wise decisions. And so, we can look to Solomon. Though He made some very poor decisions, God blessed him with much wisdom. And if God blessed him with much wisdom, we can remember too that it says in James, to come to Him and He will give us the exact wisdom that we need at the time that we need. And it will never be lacking.

Do you need grace? Consider Paul, he had an affliction, a thorn in his flesh. And he purposely prayed three times to the Lord for healing and deliverance of that affliction. And yet, the Lord said, "No." Three times, very purposefully. But what can we learn from that? How can we hallow God from his response? That God's grace is sufficient even in our affliction, just as it was for Joseph, just as it was for the Apostle Paul.

Are you not sure sometimes what to praise and worship God for? Go to the Psalms. If you got a pen, you can jot these down: Psalm 103, Psalm 117, Psalm 136. And then the last five Psalms in the book of Psalms. Psalms are chalked full of opportunities to praise and worship God. And if you're ever feeling a little bit dry to know, "What do I praise God for today? I just don't feel like, or just nothing's coming to mind," go to the Psalms.

Take a look at the next three words there. So, we've covered, "Father, hallowed be your name." Now look at, "Your kingdom come." These three words reveal our attitude, our desire. We mean His Kingdom of Grace. We need to set up a humble and lowly heart in ourselves; an attitude of surrender, an attitude of submission. We need to desire His kingdom. This is where we again, just reiterate the fact that, "He is the one that is in control and I surrender my entire life to Him. I surrender who I'm going to marry one day. I surrender how I parent today. I surrender which job I'm going to have. I surrender the attitudes that I have toward any and all people."

Jesus modelled this surrender of obedience for us when He was on the Mount of Olives. Soon to be crucified, and He was praying to the Father, Jesus knew what He was going to face in a man's agony as He went to the cross and He hung there. And every fiber of His fleshly being cried out for an escape. And yet, He humbled Himself by being obedient, by going to the cross and giving up His life. And that ought to be our attitude, "Your kingdom come." The prayers that we offer are not to be about our kingdom. "Make things better for me." Though it's rightful to ask for our needs, it's about His kingdom, drawing near to participate and seeing His kingdom grow. Seeing His kingdom extend.

It says in Luke 22, "And He being Jesus, withdrew from the disciples about a stone's throw, and

He had knelt down and He began to pray saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me, yet not My will be done but Yours.’ And then an Angel of the Lord came to Him and strengthened Him.” His heart was set on obeying the Father, regardless of His own comfort level. Often, God calls for us to walk a difficult path, doesn’t He? He refines, He sanctifies, He matures us through trials and struggles and sufferings and persecutions. And He even takes away things from us. Sometimes He takes away people from us. And He says that we are to walk by faith in obedience, trusting that His way is right and best for us. Although we think we know what is best, prayer reminds us that God's way is best, and it keeps us humble. It aligns us with His will.

The purpose of my life doesn't revolve around me and my comfort, rather our lives ought to focus on this verse; Matthew 6:33: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” But let me ask you, is that your focus? Is that your desire? Is that your ambition? Have you surrendered your life to Christ? It is to His glory to seek first and foremost His kingdom and His righteousness.

Next, in verse three, he says, “Give us each day our daily bread.” He teaches us here to pray for our needs. We acknowledge that God is our Father and we praise Him that His name is hallowed. And yet, He teaches us to petition to Him. Because, He is our provider.

This is what we find so easy to do, isn't it, with our prayers, where we spend most of our time, bringing our needs to God? And yet we have real needs. And God actually commands us to bring those needs to Him. He is the one who meets our needs, and He delights when we bring Him our needs. And yet, unfortunately this is often where we shift into a self-centeredness attitude. Sometimes, we think that God is there to give us what we want, to make us more comfortable, take away the pain, eliminate the trials of life. That He’s sort of like a vending machine of sorts, and we list off a bunch of needs that He is obliged to give us, and that we ask for. Unfortunately, that's a great misconception.

Rather, a prayer is to be communion and fellowship with God. To give Him honour and glory, to draw near to Him in prayer. It’s not to put ourselves first, but is to put God at the center and to glorify Him even in asking Him for our legitimate needs. Don't misunderstand me, it isn't wrong to bring our needs to God. In fact, He commands us to bring our requests and our needs and our supplications to Him. It says in Philippians 4:6, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

We acknowledge our complete dependence on God for our daily needs. In a time of overall great wealth compared to the rest of the world and compared to the rest of history, we need to not forget that we are actually still utterly dependent upon God. He provides for all of our needs. Our needs for the ones that are physical, the ones that are spiritual; sanctification, understanding the Word of God; the need for wisdom and strength to apply the truth of Scripture; the need for perseverance; the need for hope and faith through adversity; the need for courage to share the Gospel; the financial needs that we have; the relational needs; employment, health, safety.

We come to God weak, we come to Him poor, we come to Him humble and in dependence, in

dependence upon Him, asking for Him to provide what we need and to sustain us. We confess that He is the Creator of all things and that we are the creation, and that we depend on Him. He delights when we come with that attitude and we bring our needs to Him. He cares for all of our needs, and He is intimately involved. And I underscore the word “intimately”; intimately involved in every single area of our life. We tend to forget that, I know I do often. He is not only interested in the big things, but the small things.

Let me share with you a snippet here of what Hudson Taylor said at one point. In 1866, Hudson Taylor and his family were about to leave England and to head back to China to serve as missionaries. Some said it was foolish business. “I’m taking my children with me,” was Mr. Taylor’s reply. “And I notice that it is not difficult for me to remember that the little ones, (his children) need breakfast in the morning, dinner at midday, and something before they go to bed at night. Indeed, I could not forget it. And I find it impossible to suppose that our heavenly Father is less tender or mindful than I.” If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give us what we need?

Look at verse four. He says, “And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” If we are to glorify God in our prayers, we must take time to deal with our sin. We must humble ourselves, confess our sin and pray for those who have sinned against us. Pray that our hearts would be forgiving, just as God the Father has forgiven us. We need to keep short accounts with God and others.

I remember when I went to college down at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia back in the early ‘90s, I had a roommate whose name was Jeff. And we would often pray together, often in the evening. And I remember often, even in passing one another throughout the day, he would often say, “Have you kept short accounts with God?” And I’ll never forget that because it was sort of like his mantra. The fact that we have to keep short accounts with God. We can’t let our sin, we can’t hold onto our sin and harbor it and let it fester within us. We need to deal with that. And prayer is the prime opportunity to come to God and deal with that. Do you ever find when you go to the Lord in prayer that sin comes to mind? He uses our conscience to remind us? That’s God’s gentle and persistent way of saying, “Deal with it.”

We need to pray, we need to keep those short accounts with God and to not ignore our sins. Because otherwise, it will create, frankly a stumbling block in our relationship between us and God. Although we are legally pardoned and reconciled, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, relationally, we need to confess, and we need to repent of our sins. Though our bodies have been washed and cleansed, our feet get dirty with sin. And we need our feet washed. Prayer should be times of refreshing, knowing the refreshing and cleansing power of God over our lives.

We need to have a line of open honest communication that needs to be clear of the debris and the entanglement of sin. We need to stop holding onto our sin. When we pray, our conscience will remind us of that, and we need to avoid being bitter and holding grudges toward other people. The reality of sin separates us from God in our relationship with Him. It separates us from others in our relationship with them. Ultimately, it brings a sense of death. In a prayer, we need to deal with our sin.

So, the question is, how serious though is our sin against others? Listen to these words, immediately from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter six. "For if you forgive others of their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." You see, for the believer even though it's hard to do, and we don't always do it right away like we should, but as a believer, we're moving in the direction always of forgiving those who have hurt us. If we're not moving in that direction, we've got a problem. We need to deal with and talk to the Lord about that and ask Him to help us to do that.

Consider what John Piper says,

No one who cherishes a grudge against someone dare approach God in search of mercy. God treats us in accordance with the belief of our heart. If we believe that it is good and beautiful to harbor resentments, and tabulate wrongs that are done against us, then God will recognize that our plea for forgiveness is sheer hypocrisy. For we will be asking Him to do what we actually believe to be bad. It is a dreadful thing to try to make God our patsy by asking Him to act in a way that you as your actions show esteem very lowly. Forgiveness flows from a heart satisfied with the mercy of God and rejoicing in the consolation of our own ten-million-dollar debt, obviously, a debt that we can never pay.

But what does God do with our sin? Here's a verse that if you haven't memorized, I challenge you to memorize it; Romans 4:7-8: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." When He looks at the believer, He does not count our sin against us. It's been covered. It's not held against your account as something owing. We are amazingly blessed. His pardon is full, it's irrevocable, it's eternal, and it is refreshing. Our sins have been fully covered and we are completely pardoned.

Consider this promise of God in Psalm 103, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." If God eagerly forgives you and me, if God fully cancels the certificate of debt that we owe Him, if He casts our sin away from us as far as the east is from the west, what right do you and I have to hold sins against somebody else? We don't. At the heart of it is, a reminder that God is great in compassion and mercy and love, and He forgives us and we are to do the same. It is to God's glory, to humbly ask for forgiveness. And it is also to His glory to forgive others. It is not about our comfort. It is about His glory.

And then He says at the end of this model prayer, "And lead us not into temptation." Does this mean, "Please God, don't tempt me?" No. We know from James that God cannot tempt. He tries us, He tests us, He disciplines His children. He sometimes sprinkles us with fire, so to speak, and sometimes He makes us walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but He never tempts anyone to sin. He cannot entice and draw people towards participating in evil and wickedness. That, my friends, would be contrary to His holiness. This is rather a petition to God for His protection.

There is so much evil in this world, there is so much sin in our own hearts from Satan himself,

from the influences all around us, we need to be protected, do we not? Sin is around us and we need to pray even as Jesus prayed here. He says in John 18, He asks for disciples to be kept from the evil one. Our prayers need to ask for strength to be awake, to be sober minded, to be watching for sin.

O, how tragic it is. I don't know if you're like me, but so often that temptation comes to my door, so to speak, and I don't even recognize it as a temptation. It's almost like I put my hand out and touch it and hold it right away. We need to pray my friends that God would guard our hearts in Christ Jesus to resist sin and temptation, and that we would not be so comfortable with it so as to be familiar with its presence. But rather when it comes, to flinch, to say, "No," to resist, regardless of how tempting it is.

We need to call on God for protection and strength to resist temptation. And He is there to strengthen us. Thankfully, God has given the believer though, the Holy Spirit that lives within you. God Himself lives within the believer. To resist temptation. He protects us and we know that we can run to the Word of God to strengthen us against temptation.

Consider what it says in First Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore, let him who thinks that he stands (in other words "stands against temptation") take heed that he does not fall." If we're to think, "Oh, I would never do that," we're acting foolishly. We're speaking foolishly. We need to always be on the guard. We need to always be on the alert.

You know what? Today, I'll be honest, I woke up and I was thinking, "Okay, I gotta preach. Go over it, review it." But you know what? Most days, what I need to do (and I probably should have even this morning), is remember today is the day that I'm going to enter into a battle. There's a warfare going on out there. And it's an allegiance from my heart. It's an allegiance for my eyes, it's an allegiance for what I say. It's an allegiance for my attitude. It's calling for all of those things, and I need to resist. And by the power of God we can resist, because He lives within us and He always provides a way of escape.

So, it's also to His glory to protect His children from sin and the evil one. It's to His glory when we pray to Him, asking Him for protection from wandering into sin, and we need to obey and hold on to His Word.

Here's another verse that if you've not memorized, I challenge you to memorize it: Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." That ought to be the attitude of our heart.

But then look what it says (I'm not going to read the whole section here verses 5-13, because we've read it already once). But in this section here, Jesus is teaching us the attitude of our prayer. And He's basically saying we need to pray with persistence, with perseverance. We need to come to Him relentlessly. We need to come to Him often. We need to not give up in prayer.

Do you know how it says in James, that it says, "You have not because you ask not?" Sometimes I wonder if it might also be true that we have not, because we have not persevered in prayer. He wants us to persevere. To come boldly, to come courageously, to come relentlessly, based on

praying for the things that we know are of God, constantly. You see, God isn't like you and me. We get annoyed, right? Our kids come to us and like they ask us the same thing over and over again. It's like, "Okay, I'm getting annoyed. You've asked me the same thing and I've said 'No' ten times, or whatever it is." But God never gets annoyed with us relentlessly coming to Him, legitimately praying for the things that are in accordance with His will, submitting to Him.

Prayer is one of the great privileges of the Christian life. Persevering in prayer however, can be one of the most challenging things. Especially when circumstances get discouraging. When prayers are not answered as quickly as we would like, we can find ourselves losing faith and praying less and maybe even giving up.

But I want you to look at Daniel, for example, with me for a moment. Take Daniel in the Old Testament as an example. Daniel provides us with an incredible example of someone who persevered in prayer despite difficult, even dangerous circumstances. Daniel devoted three periods of his day to prayer. And further, although he was in the religious minority, he was in no way discreet about his prayer. Every day he opened his windows and he sought the Lord for all to see. Some of the provincial governors of Persia were jealous of Daniel, and they saw that this was an opportunity to end his life. And they convinced King Darius to make a law banning prayer to anyone other than the king himself for 30 days. They had a feeling that Daniel would not stop praying, and they were right.

As soon as Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house, he opened the windows, and he got down on his knees to pray, just as he had done before. Daniel's perseverance is inspiring, especially when we know the reason for his prayers. Because according to Daniel 9:2-3, he was praying for the restoration of Israel. In other words, he cared about God's people so much that he was interceding for them at great risk to himself, even when there was a death sentence over his head.

Choosing to be an intercessor for God's people in prayer could be a choice to die. This didn't stop Daniel. He persevered because he believed what was written in God's Word. He believed and he held to God's Word and therefore, he prayed, he prayed and he prayed. Daniel teaches us to allow the promises that God has made in His Word to govern our prayers, rather than what we might feel or see. Did you catch that? God's promises in His Word should strengthen and be the foundation for a persistent prayer.

Grace Fellowship, let's follow this example, and let's be encouraged to pray. We have even been given greater promises of deliverance in Christ our Lord and our Master. We have an even greater example of deliverance in Christ's own deliverance. We can trust God and His Word no matter the circumstances. No matter the speed at which God answers our prayers, He is good, He is faithful, He is a powerful God.

Knowing that He has given us His own Son and eternal life through Him, what we ask from Him is never too big, and it's never too good. That includes His ability to provide for all of our needs, or to help us through our trials and to keep our hearts and our faith until one day we will see Him. God is indeed a loving Father who hears the prayers of His children. So, let's be a church that prays to the glory of God, amen. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we hallow Your name. You're above all. And what a privilege, what an honour, that we have to approach You at Your throne through prayer, anytime, anywhere, to proclaim Your goodness. May we never stop. May we never cease. May we grow in that area of our life, Lord. To bring to You our prayer requests, our needs, because You provide. To humbly come before You and confess our wretched sins and then to be washed, to be cleansed, and to be strengthened by You, to have relationships made clean again, by forgiving others and letting go of the bitterness and grudges that sometimes we cling to.

We call to You Father, protect us from evil. Protect us from the evil in the world, protect us from the evil that tends to come out from within ourselves. I pray Father that we would truly learn to hate sin, and to love You. To run to You with all of our heart at all times. We love You and pray Lord that we would grow in our love for You. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.