

**THY WILL BE DONE:** God has a mind (Jer. 7:31) as well as a will (compare Isa. 46:10). He reasons (Isa. 1:18) and thinks (Jer. 29:11), although His ways and thoughts are unlike our ways and thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). God's will can be understood (Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9) and done (Mk. 3:35) from the heart (Eph. 6:6). Paul said we may carry it out in "full assurance" (Col. 2:2).

Keller (p. 71) noted how untold "millions of men and women have repeated these four words without having the faintest idea what God's will is. It is even more sobering to reflect that even more people have repeated them without any intention whatever of seeing to it that our Father's will is done; even if they did know it."

Doing God's will includes obeying the beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-11). It means being like light and salt (Mt. 5:13-16) and exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20). Doing God's will includes a willingness to sacrifice (Mt. 5:29-30) and seek "perfection" or "completeness" (Mt. 5:48). God's will is not done by the unsaved (Lk. 19:14 and compare Ps. 2:1-3).

Jesus connected God's will (verse 10) with prayer (verse 9) and this is significant. Far too often people say they have reached a doctrinal conclusion "after much prayer" and their conclusion about God's will directly conflicts with Scripture. Prayer is essential, but it can never be a basis for disobeying any part of God's will. Stated another way, prayer is never a basis for nullifying or overthrowing any part of God's word.

Boers (p. 76) said adherence to God's will means living "a life befitting the kingdom of God, a life in obedience to God. The will of God (as we pray for it here in our Lord's Prayer) refers to the purposes of God. He intends that today, here and now, we live in the promise of heaven. He intends that we follow him." Ryle (Matthew, p. 52) said "those who now obey not His laws may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them may obey them better." Following God's will is not always easy or pleasant; it is, however, always possible and right.

**AS IN HEAVEN, SO ("IN," KJV) ON EARTH:** There is a limited amount of information on God's "will being done in heaven." One text which addresses this subject is Job 1:6-12 (Satan appeared before God and God limited what he could do). In general, we may say God's will in heaven involves *completeness, joyful compliance, immediacy, reverence, and unity*.

In this part of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus affirmed a strong connection between heaven and earth. "We distinguish between heaven and earth, but in God's purposes they are intrinsically related" (Boers, p. 84) and we should see them as related. Boers (p. 88) further noted how God "does not want us to focus on heaven, although heaven is important. Nor does he want us only to focus on earth, although earth is important too. He inextricably links and connects the priorities we would separate. The mystery and paradox of the Lord's Prayer is this. It urges us first to focus heavenward, on the things that are God's (his holy name, his kingdom, his will) so we will be passionate about things of this earth," especially matters related to the church (kingdom).

**GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD:** *Bread* was a food staple for those in Jesus' day, and people ate it with virtually every meal. It is analogous to rice in Asia or tortillas in Latin America. Today we could pray, "Give us this day our daily rice" or "Give us this day our daily tortillas." This prayer for *bread* is not merely about the loaves that bakers make; it is a synecdoche for all human food we need to survive. "It refers to physical needs, emotional needs, material needs" (Kendall, p. 240), one of which could be the ability to work a secular job.

The word *bread* also points to necessities instead of luxuries. This "petition is not for milk and honey, the symbols of luxury, but for bread, and bread sufficient for the day" (McGarvey, p. 64). A right relationship "with God promises no lottery win, no vast savings account. Indeed, what we are to ask for is daily bread, a prayer which reminds us that aside from God we can rely on nothing in this world, but that with Him as Father we truly have all we need" (The Victor Bible Background Commentary, p. 35).

The word "*give*" (*didomi*) is a common New Testament term. There are texts, including here, where it "may be considered divine giving or blessing from either God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit" (CBL, GED,

2:126). Other places where this term describes the reception of divine aid include Acts 3:16 (*given* physical healing) and Acts 14:17 (*gave* rain).

God's *giving* "does not relieve us of our responsibility to work for what we receive. God supplied manna to the Exodus generation on a daily basis, but each person was required to gather what God had placed on the ground" (Richards, p. 140). Keller (p. 103) said God "provides for the wild birds and the wild flowers, so He has provided enough for us. In the same way that birds must search for their food, and that flowers must extend their leaves to the sun for sunlight, and their roots into the soil for moisture and nutrients, so we must expend ourselves. God does not drop grubs down the gullets of young birds nor does He give handouts to indolent people who simply sit in the shade and do nothing." "Putting all this into rather simple layman's language, we might state it this way: Any man or woman prepared to put God's wishes first in life is bound to have bread" (ibid, p. 104).

The word translated *daily* (*epiousios*) occurs only here and Lk. 11:3. There is some disagreement on whether this term should be understood literally or figuratively. Gingrich and Danker (pp. 296-297) listed several ways this word was used (*necessary for existence, for the current day, for today, for the following day, bread for the future, give us this day the bread that comes to it, i.e. belongs to it*). Spicq (2:57) may have offered the best definition for how it is used in the Bible: "'give us our essential bread today' (Matt), 'each day' (Luke)...this is the petition of one who is poor, or better, of a child addressing the heavenly Father." Bailey (p. 122) suggested this means "to pray for deliverance from the existential angst that there will not be enough. This fear can destroy the human spirit." This part of the model prayer tells us God is interested in our physical welfare. It also implies no need is too small to bring before God (compare 1 Pet. 5:7).

For us, the significance of Jesus' teaching may not be immediately apparent. "We know about starving countries. We have seen the images on television and in the newspapers. But few of us have been touched by hunger and starvation, although some of our parents have" (Boers, p. 94). "Most of us do not worry about daily bread. My freezer is full of bread I bought on sale. (There are plenty of other goodies there as well.) Most of us are far beyond worrying about daily bread. Most people I know are on the road to a 'good life' dominated by money, possessions, and material affluence" (ibid, p. 94). We may need to use a different illustration to communicate the Lord's point in our day and time, but it is still essential to pray for our *daily bread*. Additionally, Jesus said "*our*" bread (we must also be concerned about the needs of others). This is the only part of the "model prayer" which addresses material blessings.

**AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS:** When people recite this prayer, it is common for them to say, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Instead of being found in the Scriptures, this phraseology "is taken from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer" (Earle, pp. 6-7). Luke's record of this prayer (11:4) says, "*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*" (notice how Luke spoke of *sins* versus *debt*).

The verb translated "*forgive*" (*aphiemi*) in Mt. 6:12, 14-15; Lk. 11:4 plus other places in the New Testament was used in Classical Greek to express things like: send off, hurl, let go, discharge arrows, end a meeting, or loose a ship into the sea (CBL, GED, 1:503). New Testament writers used this term more than 140 times and the vast majority of these occurrences are in Matthew-John. In about forty-five places, including here, the meaning is "forgiveness."

Another key term is "*debts*" (*opheilema*). This word is limited to here and Rom. 4:4 in the New Testament, but the verb form of this term (*opheilo*, debtor) is found in Lk. 11:4. While these words are certainly associated with the idea of debt, the idea here is more "sin and sinner" (Turner, p. 414) versus "debt and debtor." This part of Jesus' prayer reminds us of how all accountable people are *sinner*s (compare Rom. 3:10, 23; Jas. 4:8; 1 Jn. 1:8). Jesus may have spoken of *our* sins and the sins committed *against us* because we "tend to exaggerate the sins of others and to minimize our own" (Richards, p. 140).

It may not be extremely common, but some religious groups, including cults, claim their members never sin. Such claims clearly conflict with this prayer and the passages in the preceding paragraph. Even the best Christians do not always avoid sin (Jas. 3:2).

*Our debts* (sins) are one reason why some say this prayer should be called the *model prayer* instead of the *Lord's Prayer*. It has been said Jesus would not have said "our debts" since He never sinned.

**AS WE HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS:** The Bible has much to say about forgiveness, and there are often questions about it. For instance, are there any conditions for forgiveness? Does Lk. 17:3 mean we cannot extend forgiveness to someone if they refuse to repent? Are we allowed to, as John F. Kennedy famously said, "Forgive them, yes, but don't forget their name and address"?

As used in the Bible, *forgiveness* is essentially the restoration of a relationship. "The whole essence of the word is the undeserved release of a man from something that might justly have been inflicted upon him or exacted from him" (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, p. 125). There are also some Bible verses (see Acts 2:38; 5:31; Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9) which inseparably link forgiveness with repentance and/or the confession of sin.

If the heart of forgiveness is the restoration of fellowship, what should Christians do when dealing with enemies since enemies often refuse to repent? Jesus answered this question in the previous chapter (Mt. 5:44); there He said: "Love your enemies." Christians should always try to maintain a charitable and pardoning attitude towards others rather than developing and keeping grudges and hard feelings. Mark 11:25-26 says: "*And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*" In Prov. 19:11 we find: "*The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger; And it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*"

As discussed in my commentary on 1 Cor. 13:5, *taketh no account of evil* means "instead of entering evil as a debit in its account book," love "voluntarily passes the sponge over what it endures." Love should cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), but some are still hesitant to forgive. Some mentally calculate how much of an apology they think they need to receive or offer before trying to restore a relationship.

All too often issues are never resolved or addressed in a timely way because someone is waiting for someone else to apologize. Pride and stubbornness can cause problems to linger. Kendall (p. 248) noted how it "takes minimal grace to forgive when another is sorry; it takes maximum grace to forgive when they are not sorry or don't know what they have done." For those Christians who cannot "forgive" in the sense of restoring a relationship (this includes repairing a relationship with someone who has died, restoring relationships with enemies who want to remain enemies, or seeking a relationship with people who have committed egregious criminal behavior), there can be "forgiveness" in the sense of having no malice or bitterness. Christians should be eager to quickly resolve problems (Mt. 5:25).

Moravian missionaries tried to communicate the concept of forgiveness to Eskimos in approximately 1739. This effort was initially unsuccessful because the Eskimos had no word for forgiveness. These missionaries solved this problem by creating a new word. This new term (Issumagijoujungnainermik) meant: "Not being able to think about it any more." This is an excellent definition for forgiveness. Because some disappoint us, dishonor us, lie about us, take advantage of us, fail to show proper appreciation, or are somehow disloyal, forgiveness is an important part of life. Ben Franklin said, "Doing an injury puts you below your enemy. Revenging one makes you but even with him. Forgiving it sets you above him."

Several questions from Keller (p. 210) help us gauge whether or not we are practicing the "take no account of evil" spoken of in 1 Cor. 13:5. He asked: "Do we really have a clear conscience in our relationship with other human beings? Is the atmosphere between me and my fellowman open and unclouded by hostilities? Do I still harbor old hates in my heart? Am I inclined to indulge in ill will over

some hurt? Do I allow resentments to rankle beneath the surface of my life? Is there a gnawing grudge against someone tucked away secretly in the back of my memory? Is there a bitter root of recrimination buried deep in my subconscious that sends up its shoot of cynicism to my conscious mind whenever I am reminded of some abuse or injustice I have suffered? Do the wrongs I have endured from others eat away inside me like a consuming cancer?" If we can say "yes" to at least one of these questions, how "then can we come and in good conscience ask our Father in heaven to forgive us, when we have failed to forgive others? It cannot be done except very hypocritically. God sees right through this sort of sham" (ibid, p. 120).

Jesus' point is clear—we must wipe "the slate clean of all hatred and unforgiving spirit toward others before we ask God to forgive us" (Foster, p. 864). In fact, the "degree to which I am able to and willing to forgive others is a clear indication of the extent to which I have personally experienced God my Father's forgiveness for me. The corollary to this is that anyone who is not willing to forgive another has certainly not known God's loving forgiveness" (Keller, p. 124).

Some who offend us may not know they did anything wrong. Kendall (p. 247) said, "I can safely guarantee that if I told you of my deepest hurts and won you over to my point of view, and you went to my offenders, they would say with a straight face they did nothing wrong at all. They would pass a lie detector test with flying colors! It is absolutely true that most people who have hurt us don't think we should be hurt at all."

Alexander III, the Tsar of Russia from 1881-1894, once ordered a prisoner to be exiled for life. His decree read, "*Pardon impossible, to be sent to Siberia.*" Alexander's wife was a kind-hearted woman and knew what her husband had commanded. This woman did not change the wording of her husband's order, but she did alter the punctuation; she added a comma. She revised the order to read: "*Pardon, impossible to be sent to Siberia.*" Unless we are dealing with something like a criminal act or a matter which must be treated per the steps of Mt. 18:15-17, we would be wise to also "move the comma" and forgive because we have been forgiven of a debt we could never repay (Mt. 18:23-35).

If we truly forgive someone, agape love should also keep us from discussing the matter. Nothing is gained by telling a third party how we were hurt and how we chose to forgive. Telling the person who injured us how deeply we were hurt by them is also unwise. Kendall (p. 247) astutely suggested the only time we should "say 'I forgive you' is when another is asking for forgiveness."

We may be tempted to tell an offender he or she is forgiven because the offender has *not* truly been forgiven. We "want to stick the knife in to let them know how hurt we are. We can't bear the thought they don't realize how gutted we have been. But you must consider the very likely possibility—that the person you have to forgive feels no conscience whatever for what he or she did" (Kendall, p. 163). Furthermore, saying we "forgive him or her will always backfire and be counterproductive" (ibid, p. 247).

It is sometimes asked how we can know if we have truly forgiven someone. "Here is a succinct summary of how to know you have forgiven those who have been unkind and unjust to you: (1) You will not tell others what they did to you; (2) you will not let the person who hurt you be afraid of you; (3) you will not heap guilt on them, even helping them—if possible—to forgive themselves; (4) you let them save face; (5) you protect them from their darkest secret being disclosed; (6) you do it as long as you live—it is a 'lifetime sentence'; and (7) you bless them, including sincerely praying for them" (Kendall, p. 166).

Refusing to forgive, which is what many seem to choose, is sinful (Mt. 18:21-22, 28-35; Mk. 11:26; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Refusing to forgive creates many hardships and is likely the basis for some wise sayings. More than one has said, "If we refuse to forgive, we break the bridge over which we must pass ourselves." More wise words are: "Anger is an acid which can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured."

**AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,** These words are a *litotes*, a figure of speech which is

“negation of the contrary.” We use this same figure of speech when we say things such as “She is not a bad cook,” “not a few,” “no small proof,” “not at all disagreeable,” or “is not unsuccessful.” Other verses which contain this figure of speech include Jn. 6:37 (“I will in no wise cast out”), Col. 3:19 (“love your wives, and be not bitter against them”), Acts 17:4 (“not a few”), and 2 Cor. 2:11 (“we are not ignorant of his devices”). The thought in 2 Cor. 2:11 is “we know them exactly” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:21).

*Lead us not into temptation* is another way of saying: “Lead us away from it; lead us into righteousness. Take us into situations, where instead of being tempted, we will be protected and kept righteous” (“delivered from evil,” 13b). The New Living Translation says, “don’t let us yield to temptation.”

Christians are to pray about sin and temptation because they have weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The devil is willing to attack God’s people in any way he can (compare Mt. 4:1-4; 2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Pet. 5:8), and attacking saints in their frailest areas is smart strategy. In fact, at least some of Satan’s attacks might be compared to the anterior fontanel (soft spot) on an infant’s head. This area is especially susceptible to injury because an infant’s skull bones are not fully fused. In a similar way, Christians may have some “soft spots” which need extra attention and protection.

If we struggle “with gambling, we should not be in a casino. If we have problems with materialism, we should not hang out in malls (and perhaps we should not watch television commercials). If we have problems with alcohol, we should not be in bars. If we have problems with sex, we should not expose ourselves to sexual temptation. That is just common sense” (Boers, p. 131).

Christians need to be careful because Satan is the “tempter” (Jas. 1:13) who “sows tares in the field” (Mt. 13:27-28) and seeks to remove God’s word from the heart (Mt. 13:19). He is always busy (1 Pet. 5:8) so Christians must “watch and pray” (Mt. 26:41) and wear the Christian armor (Eph. 6:11) to help thwart his attacks (compare 1 Thess. 3:5).

Ryle (Matthew, pp. 53-54) observed how Jesus intended for us “to ask God to deliver us from the evil that is in the world, the evil that is within our own hearts, and not least from that evil one, the devil. We confess that, so long as we are in the body, we are constantly seeing, hearing, and feeling the presence of evil. It is about us, and within us, and around us on every side; and we entreat Him, who alone can preserve us, to be continually delivering us from its power.” God can aid us in times of temptation “by removing the temptation itself, when it proves too hard for us, or by mitigating its force, or by increasing our strength to resist it” (MacKnight, 1:450, and compare 2 Thess. 3:1-3).

**BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:** The verb “*deliver*” (*rhuomai*) is not included in Luke’s record (11:4) of the model prayer. The presence of this word in Matthew’s account should be understood as man’s desire to “be freed from the power which dominates this age and is constantly threatening him.” The point is similar to Rom. 7:24. There Paul said: “*Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?*” This question is answered in Rom. 7:25a: “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Compare Rom. 11:26; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:9.

There is some debate over whether Jesus meant deliverance from “evil” or “evil one” (Satan). This question is more academic than practical because evil exists, Satan is the “evil one,” and we need *deliverance* from both. Kendall (p. 260) envisioned the devil having “a computer printout on your nature, habits, past and lifestyle, and knows exactly how to bring you down by exploiting your weaknesses.” The Bible does indicate Satan has an understanding of who the saved are (compare Lk. 22:31; Acts 19:15). It also says the saved (Rev. 14:1) and the unsaved (Rev. 14:11) are *marked*.

At the end of verse 13 the KJV adds: “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*” This addition “is not found in the earliest manuscripts, nor in the church fathers” (Earle, p. 7). While likely not penned by Matthew, this is a fitting ending for this prayer. This prayer begins with a reference to God’s holiness (“*hallowed,*” verse 9) and ends (KJV and some other versions) with a reference to God’s greatness and glory. “The entire prayer is framed by praise” (Boers, p.

147). Compare 1 Chron. 29:11-13.

**Five-Finger Prayers:**

Different methods have been devised to help people improve their prayer lives. One method is the acrostic ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication). Another is the "Five-Finger" method. This approach begins with the thumb; the thumb reminds us to pray for those closest to us (Phil. 1:3-5). The index finger can be used as a pointer. It helps us remember to pray for those who teach (preachers, missionaries, Bible class teachers, etc. Compare 1 Thess. 5:25). The next finger is the tallest. It prompts us to pray for those who have authority over us (local and national leaders, those who have authority at school, work, etc. Compare 1 Tim. 2:1-2). The next finger is generally the weakest, and this digit reminds us to recall those who are in trouble or suffering. Compare Jas. 5:13-16. Our last finger is the smallest and reminds