



*“OUR FATHER WHO ART
IN HEAVEN”*

By Ron Christian

” This, then, is how you should pray:

*” Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”*”

Matthew: 6: 9-13 (NIV)

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CHAPTER 1 –

***“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy
Name”. (Part 1)***

CHAPTER 1 – OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way - *“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”*. (Part I)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Our Father in heaven let your name be held holy.”* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

It is not a child’s prayer and it is not primarily a Family Prayer. Rather, it is a disciple’s prayer which must be repeated with great earnestness and understanding.

PROPOSITION:

In this message we shall look at the first two words in the prayer – **OUR FATHER**. These two words – Our Father – tell us two things about God – God’s love and God’s Family.

- I. “FATHER REMINDS US OF GOD’S LOVE.**
 - A. To call God ‘Father’ Gives Us A Right Relationship With The Unseen World.**
 - B. To Call God ‘Father’ Gives Us A Right Relationship With The Seen World.**

- II. “OUR REMINDS US OF GOD’S FAMILY.**
 - A. We Find God Through Service To Others.**
 - B. We Find Ourselves Through Service To Others.**

CONCLUSION:

The Beneficent Father wills only good for His children, even if that good is found in circumstances that appear to be unexplainable.

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: Pray This Way - *"Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name"*. (Part I)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *"Our Father in heaven let your name be held holy."* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

In considering The Lord's Prayer, it is important to realize that this prayer is a prayer which only a Christian disciple can properly appreciate. This prayer was given by Jesus to His disciples and is therefore really a disciple's prayer. It is not a child's prayer and it is not primarily a Family Prayer. Rather, it is a disciple's prayer which must be repeated with great earnestness and understanding.

How often people have repeated this prayer glibly with no real thought or understanding as they repeated it. Anyone can repeat this prayer but only a Christian can repeat this prayer with meaning. Some people recite the Lord's Prayer like they recite the twenty-third Psalm. Some people are skilled in expression but are cold in heart, and dull in understanding.

"There is a famous story which tells how a company of people were dining together one evening. After dinner it was agreed that each one should recite something. A well-known actor rose and, with all the resources of oratory and elocution and dramatic art, he declaimed the twenty-third Psalm and sat down to tremendous applause. A quiet and silent man followed him. He too began to recite the twenty-third Psalm and at first there was rather a titter of laughter. But before he had ended there was a stillness that was more eloquent than any applause. When he had spoken the last words there was a silence, and then the actor leant across and said, "Sir, I know the Psalm, but you know the shepherd." (Barclay's Corinthians, p. 276) This prayer which we are going to study must be repeated only by those who know the Shepherd, for it is only in knowing the Shepherd, that one can understand the significance of the prayer.

PROPOSITION:

Let us now proceed with a detailed study of the prayer. In this message we shall look at the first two words in the prayer – OUR FATHER. We shall spend most of our time in consideration of the meaning and implication of 'Father', but we will also in more brevity consider the meaning of 'Our'. (These two words – Our Father – tell us two things about God – God's love and God's Family).

I. 'FATHER' REMINDS US OF GOD'S LOVE.

The very expression ‘father’ usually reminds a child of protection and love, although this is not always true in the human realm. In the spiritual realm, however, the expression ‘Father’ is meant to always remind us of God’s love.

A. To Call God ‘Father’ Gives Us A Right Relationship With The Unseen World. (Barclay’s Matthew 20)

A question that many people want answered is this: “Is this a friendly universe”? There are many cynical and despairing philosophers who consider man a victim of fate living on the outer fringes of a hostile universe. Many consider Mencken’s impious creed to be true: “The universe, a gigantic wheel in rapid revolution; man, a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on the rim thereof; religion, the fly’s delusion that the wheel was constructed to give him the ride.” The atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell considers man the subject of a pitiless doom. He says, “Brief and powerless is man’s life. On him and his entire race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way.” (The Word of The Lord Came Unto Me Also; p. 128)

Jesus came to tell us that this universe is essentially a friendly universe. Jesus showed us that God is love. What Jesus is, God has always been. That means that God has always been a God of love. It is a mistaken idea to think for instance, that the God of the Old Testament was a God of Hate and Vengeance and therefore Jesus came to change God’s mind and appease His wrath. If the God of the Old Testament appears to be a God of wrath, it is because man’s conception of God was imperfect. It is not God who has changed. He has always been the same – a God of love. It is man’s conception of God that has matured. The chief cause for the maturity of man’s conception of God was the coming of Christ to earth. Christ came to show us what God is and always has been – a God of love. Christ showed man how great God’s love is. Christ showed man that God’s love is so great that He can be called ‘Father’. That means that God is not far removed and unconcerned for man. Because God’s heart is a Father’s heart, man can approach Him in confidence and love.

Barclay cites the following illustration in his commentary. “There is an old Roman story which tells how a Roman Emperor was enjoying a triumph. He had the privilege which Rome gave to her great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome with all his captured trophies and his prisoners in his train. So the Emperor was on the march with his troops. The streets were lined with cheering people. The tall legionaries lined the street’s edges to keep the people in their places. At one point on the triumphal route there was a little platform where the Empress and her family were sitting to watch the Emperor go by in all the pride of his triumph. On the platform with his mother there was the Emperor’s youngest son, a little boy. As the Emperor came near the little

boy jumped off the platform, burrowed through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of a legionary, and to run out on to the road to meet his father's chariot. The legionary stooped down and stopped him and he swung him up in his arms: 'You can't do that, boy,' he said. 'Don't you know who that is in the chariot? That's the Emperor. You can't run out to his chariot.' And the little lad laughed down. 'He may be your Emperor,' he said, 'but he's my father.' That is exactly the way in which the Christian feels towards God. The might, and the majesty, and the power are the might, and the majesty, and the power of one whom Jesus Christ taught us to call Our Father." (Matthew 202)

How different is the Christian's God from the myriad of heathen Gods. The God of the Christians is trustworthy, beneficent, and loving. The heathen Gods are pitiless, grudging, and hateful. It is oftentimes a great relief for a pagan worshipper to learn that there is only one true God who is not wrathful and grudging but who is loving and caring. Jesus came to show us that the unseen world which is controlled by God is not against us but that it is for us.

B. To Call God 'Father' Gives Us A Right Relationship With The Seen World.

Not only has Jesus shown us that we are living in a friendly universe, but Jesus has shown us that the Christian is living in a friendly world. How is this possible? It is because Jesus has shown us that all circumstances can be used for God's glory and man's good.

Because Christ was God and has visited man, He understands the human situation. "For in that He (Christ) Himself was tried and suffered, He is able to help those who are undergoing trial." (Barclay's Hebrews 2:18)

"Foster in one of his books tells a thing. He came into his home in this country one day in the thirties to find his daughter in tears before the radio set. He asked her why. He found that the news bulletin that day had contained one sentence – 'Japanese tanks entered Canton to-day!' Most people must have heard that with at the most a faint feeling of regret. Statesmen may have heard it with a feeling of grim foreboding. But to most people it did not make so very much difference. Why then was John Foster's daughter in tears? Because she had been born in Canton. To her Canton meant a home, a nurse, school friends, a well-loved place. The difference was that she had been there. When you have been there it makes all the difference. And there is no part of human experience of which God cannot say: 'I have been there.' When we have a sad and sorry tale to tell, when life has drenched us with the tears of things, we do not go to a God who is quite incapable of understanding what has happened to us; we go to a God who has been there." (Barclay's Hebrews; pgs. 40, 41)

Because the Christian is serving a God of love, he is enabled to accept even unpleasant things with submission. For instance the Christian can look at pain as not being altogether bad. Pain can be good since it warns us that our body needs attention. Kagawa, a great Japanese Christian who experienced considerable pain, looked at pain optimistically. Says Kagawa, "There are three kinds of people who do not feel pain: the crazy, feeble-minded, intoxicated. So when you complain about pain you may rejoice that you are not one of these." (Kagawa, *Japanese Prophet* by Trout; p. 52) Sorrow also can be good, since it can draw us nearer to God. One who has experienced sorrow is better equipped truly to sympathize with his fellowmen. After one man told how his mother had lost her dearest son, he says, "That is where my mother got her soft eyes and why other mothers ran to her when they had lost a child." (Barclay's *Corinthians*; p. 191) Because God became a man, He understands all about us.

Because God is love, we can even accept the unexplainable things of life without becoming bitter. Says Barclay about these unexplainable things of life: "Into life for everyone at some time there comes something for which there seems to be no reason, something which passes comprehension and something which defies explanation. It is then that a man is faced with life's hardest battle – the battle to accept when he cannot understand. At such a time there is only one thing to do – to submit, to accept, to obey; and to do so without resentment and without rebellion, saying: *'God, Thou art love! I build my faith on that.'*" (Barclay's *Hebrews*; p. 173)

A London minister tells about a father whose son was fighting in France. "At our prayer meeting," said the pastor, "he would earnestly pray that God would hide that soldier son beneath His wings. He once added with deep tenderness, 'The bullet was never made that can pierce Thy wings'. But the boy was killed all the same." This appears to be an unexplainable happening that seems to defy understanding. It is at such times that faith is most severely tested. George Tyrell once boldly said: "To believe that this terrible machine world is really from God, in God, and unto God, and that through it and in spite of its blind fatality all works for good – that is faith in long trousers." (Paul Rees; *Prayer and Life's Highest*; p. 95)

Realizing that God is love will enable one to meet the circumstances of life – even those that are unexplainable – and will save one from cynicism, and despair. It is a great comfort to know that God is Father, and a loving father will never cause his child a needless tear.

II. 'OUR' REMINDS US OF GOD'S FAMILY.

Barclay says about this part of the prayer, "If God is Father, He is Father of all men. The Lord's Prayer does not teach us to pray My Father; it teaches us to pray Our

Father. It is very significant that in the Lord's Prayer the word I, me, my, and mine, never occur; it is true to say that Jesus came to take these words out of life and to put in their place we, us, and ours. God is not any man's exclusive possession. The very phrase Our Father involves the elimination of self. The fatherhood of God is the only possible basis of the brotherhood of man." (Barclay's Matthew; vol. 1, p. 202)

When we pray 'Our Father', we are reminded that we are members of a family and that we have brothers and sisters to love. We are reminded that life consists in serving others and not in being served.

A. We Find God Through Service To Others.

It is true that a Christian can never advocate a solitary religion. No Christian desires to go to heaven without taking others with him. We cannot be interested in God without being interested in our fellowmen. We cannot love the invisible God without truly loving our visible brothers. *"It is this command that we have from Him, that he who loves God, loves his brother also."* (I John 4: 21) In fact, we actually find God through doing service to others. In Ernest Crosby's poem "The Search" he says;

"No one could tell me where my soul might be;
I sought for God, but God eluded me;
I sought my brother out and found all three."

Barclay relates the following story. "Edgerton Young was the first missionary to the Red Indians. In Saskatchewan he went out to find them and he told them of the love of God, the Father. To the Indians it was like a new revelation. When the missionary had told his message, an old chief said: 'When you spoke of the great Spirit just now, did I hear you say, "Our Father"?' 'Yes', said Edgerton Young. 'That is very new and sweet to me', said the chief. 'We never thought of the great Spirit as Father. We heard Him in the thunder; we saw Him in the lightning, the tempest and the blizzard, and we were afraid. So when you tell us that the great Spirit is our Father that is very beautiful to us.' The old man paused, and then he went on, as a glimpse of glory suddenly shone on him. 'Missionary, did you say that the great Spirit is your Father?' 'Yes,' said the missionary. 'And', said the chief, 'did you say that He is the Indians' Father?' 'I did' said the missionary. 'Then', said the old chief, like a man on whom a dawn of joy had burst, 'you and I are brothers!' The only possible unity for men is in their common sonship with God." (Barclay's John; vol. 2; pgs. 74, 75)

B. We Find Ourselves Through Service To Others.

Preoccupation with self and selfish interests is one of the biggest problems we face. To serve others will save us from physical, psychological, and spiritual problems.

Someone once asked Dr. Karl Menninger what he would advise a person to do if he felt a nervous breakdown coming on. His answer was surprising to some, but very sound: "If you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, lock up your house, go across the railway tracks and find someone in need and do something for him." (Prayer and Life's Highest; p. 55) Involvement in other people's problems oftentimes offers therapeutic cure to one's own needs.

When Kagawa was young he was told that he would die, but the doctors were wrong. He lived past seventy, and the explanation for his extended life lies in his involvement in other people's problems. Says Kagawa, "When I suffered from tuberculosis I thought I was dying so I decided to do some good before I died. That is the reason I entered the slums. I thought if I went to heaven and confessed that I was lazy on the earth, God would say to me, 'No place for you.'...In the slums, I had no door. I had the 'open-air cure', and it cured me of tuberculosis. It is interesting that because I lived in the slums I was cured of my sickness. I had improvement of health and I am here tonight. This way of cure I always recommend to my friends in Japan who are suffering from tuberculosis." (Trout; Kagawa, Japanese Prophet; pgs. 51, 52) Healing sometimes comes through involvement. To pray 'Our Father' should remind us that we are our brothers' keeper. To render service to others enables us to find God and enables us to find ourselves.

CONCLUSION:

To pray 'Our Father' means that we are acknowledging God's love and also acknowledging God's family. This reminds us of God's Fatherhood and reminds us of man's brotherhood.

Because God is 'Father' His children can be confident that they live in a friendly universe and also a friendly world. The Beneficent Father wills only good for His children, even if that good is found in circumstances that appear to be unexplainable.

Membership in God's family assumes responsibility and involvement in the needs of one's fellow brothers and sisters. We find God and we find ourselves through involvement and service to others.

CHAPTER 2 - Pray This Way –

“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”. (Part II)

CHAPTER 2 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *"Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name"*. (Part II)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *"Our Father in Heaven let your name be held holy."* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

In an age in which man feels self-sufficient and powerful, man needs to be reminded of his creature hood and needs to be reminded of God's Creator hood.

PROPOSITION:

It is God's Power that is the emphasis of this message. Through the approach of contrast, we can gain a greater appreciation of man's finiteness and a greater appreciation of God's Almighty Power.

- I. OUR FATHER 'IN HEAVEN' REMINDS US OF GOD'S POWER.**
 - A. Man Is Limited But God Is Omnipotent.**
 - B. Man Is Transitory But God Is Eternal.**

CONCLUSION:

To pray Our Father 'In Heaven' reminds us of our humanity and human weakness, and it reminds us of God's Power.

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”*. (Part II)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Our Father in Heaven let your name be held holy.”* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

In the first message on this petition, it was noted that the word ‘FATHER’ reminds us of God’s love. It was noted also that the word ‘OUR’ reminds us of God’s family. This petition and the two following petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, direct our attention toward God. They remind us of God’s nature and purpose.

This first petition of the Lord’s Prayer, reminds us of four things about God: (1) God’s Love, (2) God’s Family, (3) God’s Power, and (4) God’s Holiness.

It is the third attribute of God around which this message is constructed. In an age in which man feels self-sufficient and powerful, man needs to be reminded of his creature hood and needs to be reminded of God’s Creatorhood. It is when man views God and His mighty works that he learns anew that he is limited, weak, finite, and dependent.

PROPOSITION:

It is God’s Power that is the emphasis of this message. Through the approach of contrast, we can gain a greater appreciation of man’s finiteness and a greater appreciation of God’s Almighty Power.

I. OUR FATHER ‘IN HEAVEN’ REMINDS US OF GOD’S POWER.

In the day in which we live when it is so easy to sentimentalize about God, it is important for us to realize that God is not human and earthly, but that He is divine and heavenly. The contemporary world is awed by man’s great technological and scientific advances, and idolizes that which is powerful. It is time for our age to realize anew that man is not as powerful as he thinks he is, and that God is infinitely more powerful than He has been conceived to be.

To call God Our Father ‘In Heaven’ will remind us of the Infinite Power of God and the Finite Weakness of Man. The thing that is most astounding about man is not his strength but his weakness. The religion of humanism has so idolized man and his abilities that man is pictured as a self-sufficient and potentially all-powerful being. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite man’s technological advances and despite potential resources, man remains weak and dependent. Man’s mind is capable of amazing feats and astounding inventions, but even then man must ever remember

that his accomplishments are more the produce of revelation and sudden insight than he realizes.

It is not man's power that we need to emphasize. Man is really a very weak and finite creature. It is God's Eternal Power that we must constantly realize. To pray Our Father 'In Heaven' should remind us of God's Eternal Power and Man's Finite weakness.

A. Man Is Limited But God Is Omnipotent.

When one man considered man in view of the vastness of the universe, he pessimistically declared that "Man is but a rash on the epidermis of the universe." Although the cynicism and pessimism that is evident in this statement is not in accord to the Biblical view of man, there is one thing that this statement acknowledges: Man's finiteness and incomparable smallness.

It is not a pessimistic view of man that is the true and realistic picture of man. To look at man realistically is to look at him in the light of God and His powerful creation. Such a comparison is not meant to produce cynicism, pessimism, or futility, but rather such a comparison is meant to produce humility, awe, and appreciation.

David looked at man in a new way when he looked at man in the context of God's marvelous and vast creation. *"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, How much greater is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him but little lower than Thyself, and Crownest him with glory and honor."* (Psalms 8 Part)

Considering God's Power and the vastness of His universe, man's involvement in the world appears to be very insignificant. *"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing...All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."* (Isaiah 40:15, 17) Man is limited greatly. He is limited by gravity. Man's most powerful machines will project him only a very small distance into the vastness of space. Man's probing telescopic instruments only magnify man's limitation and remind him of God's infinite power and man's relative insignificance.

When man honestly appraises his increasing knowledge of the earth and the universe he must be compelled to declare: "Human Beings are very weak and limited and are the humble creatures of an Almighty Creator." Geological and astronomical facts have actually increased man's appreciation of his Creator's Power.

To gain a greater appreciation of our smallness and our Creator’s greatness, let us look at a few astronomical facts...Consider the Solar System in comparison to the Milky Way Galaxy. The Solar System is comprised of nine planets – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto – all of which orbit our Sun. “It is roughly 4,000 million miles from the sun to the outermost planet, 27 million, million miles from the sun to the nearest star. To give these distances meaning, let us try a drastic reduction of scale. Take a golf ball to represent the sun, and a dozen feet away put a small sand grain to represent the earth. The farthest planet, Pluto, will be another sand grain 500 feet from the golf ball. Within the 1,000 feet wide orbit of Pluto are all the other planets. But to place the nearest star in our model, we must take another golf ball 600 miles away!...On this scale the moon would be scarcely more than a dust speck about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the sand grain.” (Fundamentals of Physical Science; pgs. 583, 584)

The Milky Way Galaxy, of which our Sun and its nine orbiting planets is only a very small part, is said to contain about 100 billion stars! Almost every star we see in the night sky is a member of the Milky Way Galaxy. Our sun is the closest star to us, of course. It is for this reason that it appears so much larger than the other stars. Actually, however, the sun is a very average-sized star. In comparison to some stars, the sun is very small.

Look at the earth in connection to the sun. The earth is constantly rotating on its axis at the rate of 1000 miles per hour, or put in other terms, about one-fourth mile per second. While the earth is rotating on its axis, it is also revolving around the sun once each year. In one year’s time, the earth travels 595 million miles in its orbit around the sun, or at a speed of $18 \frac{1}{2}$ miles per second! While the earth is rotating on its axis at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile per second, and while the earth is orbiting the sun at a rate of $18 \frac{1}{2}$ miles per second, the entire Solar system (sun and nine planets) are all traveling in space at the rate of 12 miles per second (43,000 mph) and are headed toward a certain star in outer space – the star Vega.

Thus, to look at the speed of orbits alone will give us a greater appreciation of our Creator’s orderly universe. In our Space Age, we are very conscious of distances and speeds. “From the earth to our nearest neighbor, the moon, is 240,000 miles; from the earth to the sun is 93 million miles. A rocket traveling away from the earth at a steady speed of 10,000 mi/hr., would take 24 hours to reach the moon, more than a year to reach the sun.” (Ibid; p. 584) “Although we are the enormous distance of 93 million miles from the sun, the next nearest star (Proxima Centauri) is more than 270,000 times farther away. Light takes 8 minutes to reach us from the sun but more than four years from Proxima

Centauri – and billions of years from the most distant observed stars.” (Ibid; p. 601)

At this point, it would be helpful to mention what the speed of light is. Light travels at the fantastic speed of 186,000 miles per second. This means that if you could travel around the world seven and a half times in one second’s time, you would be travelling about the speed of light.

What about the size of the earth in comparison to our sun? “The sun’s mass is over 300,000 times greater than that of the earth and its volume is so immense that 1,300,000 earths would fit into it.” (Ibid, p. 607)

Consider briefly the Milky Way Galaxy in relationship to other Galaxies in the Universe. The size of the Milky Way is almost incomprehensibly huge. Travelling at the speed of light (186,000 mph), it would take 20 thousand years to go the shortest distance across our Galaxy. Going from one length of it to the other, it would take 100 thousand years, travelling at the speed of light! The figures given are only those for one galaxy – The Milky Way Galaxy. However, there are literally hundreds of billions of galaxies in God’s Universe! The next closest galaxy to the Milky Way Galaxy is the Great Andromeda Galaxy which is 2.2 million light years away (22 times the length of the Milky Way Galaxy). It is believed by scientists that the Universe is constantly expanding at a fantastic rate. It is believed that the most distant galaxies from our own galaxy are moving away from our Milky Way galaxy at the rate of 150,000 mi/per/sec.

After reviewing a few amazing facts regarding our Universe, it surely is not hard to believe the Psalmist’s words: “*God hath spoken once; twice I have heard this; that power belongeth unto God.*” (Psalm 62: 11) How beautiful are Isaiah’s words about God: “*It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heaven as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.*” (Isaiah 40: 22)

B. Man Is Transitory But God Is Eternal.

Man’s life is brief and passing. He comes on the stage of history to play his little part and then soon passes off that stage to let another generation occupy his place. “All flesh is like grass, and its glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and its flower fades; but the Word of the Lord lasts forever.” (Barclay: Peter 1: 24) Death is the common denominator of all men. “*For the living know that they shall die.*” (Ecclesiastes 9: 5a) “What is your life like? You are like a mist which appears for little time, and then disappears”. (Barclay James 4: 14) Man labors hard throughout his short lifespan only to leave his laboriously-gained goods to someone else. “*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat*

bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Genesis 3: 19)

In contrast to man’s brief passing existence, God is eternal and unchanging. Time is only an outcrop in eternity; God is not limited by the dimensions and passing of time. God is eternal in the heavens. God had no beginning and shall have no end. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God...For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Psalms 90: 1, 2, and 4)

Man is staggered by the aeons of time that passed ever before man appeared on the scene. Recorded history occupies only a small fraction of the time of the earth’s existence. Says one historian about recorded history in comparison to the earth’s existence: “Scientists now assign to the earth an existence covering at least four billion years – perhaps more. The staggering immensity of this period impresses upon us the brevity of human history when compared to the whole span of earth history. Let us use a simple comparison and assume that these four billion years of the earth’s history were compressed into one year’s time. One hundred and twenty-five years would then go by as one second. According to this timetable, mankind first appeared on earth something over an hour ago. The pyramids of Egypt were built forty seconds ago, the Hebrews wandered into Palestine less than half a minute ago, Caesar was murdered some sixteen seconds ago, Christ was Crucified a little more than a quarter of a minute ago, Columbus discovered America less than four seconds ago, and by this same schedule the American Republic has existed less than a second and a half in the long year of earth history!” (The Peoples of The Ancient World; by Swain and Armstrong; pgs. 1, 22)

Barclay uses another comparison: “History is a process of almost unimaginable length. It has been put this way. Suppose all time to be represented by a column the height of Cleopatra’s Needle with one single postage stamp upon the top of it, then the length of recorded history is represented by the thickness of the postage stamp, and the unrecorded history which went before it by the height of the whole column.” (Barclay’s Peter; p. 297)

It is believed that the Universe is something like 13 billion years old. And yet, to God, this is not staggering and impressive, for God is eternal in the Heavens and is not confined by time or space. God is the Creator of the world and universe and is thus over and above it and independent of it. Listen to the descriptive language of God’s creative works: “Bless – affectionately, gratefully praise – the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great! You are clothed with honor and majesty: Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who has stretched

out the heavens like a curtain or a tent. Who lays the beams of the upper room of His abode in the waters (above the firmament)? Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, Who makes winds His messengers, flames of fire His ministers. You laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved forever. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hasted away. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place which You appointed for them." (Psalms 104: 1-8, Amplified)

Considering God's mighty acts, is it any wonder that man feels insignificant? God is the Almighty Creator; man is the finite creature of dust. That man is literally made of the earth's elements is understood well by the chemist. As one has noted: Man is made of "material substances which can be purchased at the corner drugstore for less than five dollars". (The Word of The Lord Came Unto Me Also; p. 121) And yet the Eternal Creator loves and cares for man!

Man is weak but God is Almighty. Even among the other creatures on earth, man is very weak. Man is not the fastest animal; man is not the biggest animal; man is far from being the strongest animal. And yet God has endowed man with an intellect to enable him to dominate the earth. Isaiah reminds man of his weakness in contrast to God's power when he asks the question: "*Who hath measured the waters in the hallow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighted the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*" (Isaiah 40: 12) In contrast to God whom Isaiah says can weigh the mountains in scales, man would have a life-time job on his hands if he had to overturn a section of land with a hand spade! Man becomes weary so soon and has to spend a third of his seventy years sleeping. In contrast, God never becomes weary or faint. "*Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?*" (Isaiah 40: 28)

CONCLUSION:

Man is really very weak and limited. It is not man's accomplishments and independence that is astonishing; in contrast, it is man's limitations and dependency that is astonishing. Man is one of the smaller, slower, and weaker earthly creatures, although God has assigned to him the most significant role on earth. It is in contrast to the Almighty God that man really gains his insignificance. Man is limited but God is Omnipotent and therefore the entire Universe is subject to His command. Man is transitory but God is eternal in the Heavens. To pray Our Father 'In Heaven' reminds us of our humanity and human weakness, and it reminds us of God's Power.

CHAPTER 3 - Pray This Way

"Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name". (Part III)

CHAPTER 3 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”*. (Part III)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Our Father in Heaven let your name be held holy.”* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

This first petition of the Lord’s Prayer teaches us four things about God: (1) God’s Love, (2) God’s Family, (3) God’s Power, (4) God’s Holiness.

PROPOSITION:

It is God’s Holiness which is the chief subject of this message.

I. ‘HALLOWED BE THY NAME’ REMINDS US OF GOD’S HOLINESS.

A. Meaning Of The Words

1. Meaning of ‘Hallowed’
2. Meaning of ‘Name’

B. Message Of The Words

1. Definition of Reverence
2. Essentials of Reverence
 - (a) Conviction of God’s Existence
 - (b) Conviction of God’s Righteous Character
 - (c) Conviction of God’s Omnipresence

CONCLUSION:

This part of the Lord’s Prayer is a prayer to be enabled to reverence God as God deserves to be revered.

CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Our Father Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”*. (Part III)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Our Father in Heaven let your name be held holy.”* (Matthew 6:9)

INTRODUCTION:

The first petition of the Lord’s Prayer is *“Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name.”* It is the last part of this petition which we are presently interested in: *“Hallowed Be Thy Name.”* Says Barclay about this phrase: “It is probably true to say that of all the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer this is the one the meaning of which we would find it most difficult to express. If we were asked, what does this petition actually mean? Not a few of us would find some difficulty in answering.” (Barclay)

Because there is much truth hidden in this phrase *“Hallowed Be Thy Name”*, we must spend another message seeking better to understand it. ‘This first petition of the Lord’s Prayer teaches us four things about God: (1) God’s Love, (2) God’s Family, (3) God’s Power, (4) God’s Holiness.

PROPOSITION:

It is God’s Holiness which is the chief subject of this message. To better understand this phrase *“Hallowed Be Thou Name”* we will take the approach of first seeking to understand the meaning of the words, and then secondly seeking to understand the broader implication and message of the words.

I. ‘HALLOWED BE THY NAME’ REMINDS US OF GOD’S HOLINESS.

Let us attempt first to understand the meaning of the words involved in this phrase, and then attempt better to appreciate the implications and applications of these words.

A. Meaning of the Words

The two words which we must seek to understand are the words ‘Hallowed’ and ‘Name’. To understand the meaning of these words, will aid us in better appreciating this petition.

1. Meaning of ‘Hallowed’.

Notes Barclay, “The word which is translated hallowed is a part of the Greek verb *hagiazesthai*. The Greek verb *hagiazesthai* is connected with the adjective *hagios*, and means ‘to treat a person or a thing as *hagios*. *Hagios* is the word which is usually translated holy: but the basic meaning of *hagios* is

different or separate. A thing which is hagios is 'different' from other things. A person which is hagios is 'separate' from other people." (Barclay's Matthew v. 1, p. 205)

Let us further note how the word hagios is used in the Bible. The Temple was hagios or holy because it was separated from other buildings and was used for special purposes. (Exodus 26: 33). The altar was separated for a special divine purpose and was thus holy. God's day is holy because it is separated from other ordinary days. Because the priests performed special duties and had a particular function different from other men, they were considered holy. Concerning the priests it is written: "*They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.*" (Leviticus 21:6) Of the tithe it is said: "*The tenth shall be holy unto the Lord, because it is the Lord's*". (Leviticus 27: 30, 32) Because God revealed Himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai, this mountain was considered holy or separate in importance from other mountains, and therefore Moses was instructed to fence it off so that no person or animal came near it. Because the Jewish nation had a special role to play in the scheme of God's plan and purpose, this nation was considered holy and separated unto God. Said God to Israel: "*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*" (Exodus 19: 6a)

Each of the cited references simply point out one of the essential meanings of the word hagios. The word 'Hallowed' which is in the same category of words as hagios is used in the Lord's Prayer as it is essentially used in the Old Testament references cited above. Because hagios means different and separate, this petition means (as Barclay has pointed out): "Let God's name be treated different and separate, Let his name be treated differently from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 205)

2. Meaning of 'Name'.

The word 'Name' has a very special usage in the Bible. As Barclay notes, "In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called – John or James, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us." (Barclay's Matthew v. 1; p. 205) Psalms 9: 10 says, "*They that know Thy name will trust in Thee.*" Clearly this does not merely refer to God's name but it rather refers to God's character and nature. One who is convinced of the powerful and holy character of God, will put his trust in God. Psalms 20: 7 says, "*Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we will remember the name of Jehovah our God.*" In other words, when one remembers the character, nature, and personality of

Jehovah, he will not put his trust in human strength or might, but rather he will put his trust in God. Psalms 5: 11 says, *"Let them that love thy name be joyful in thee."* This could be paraphrased "Let them that have learned to love God for what he really is have joy because of this knowledge of the character of God." St. John writes of Jesus as the Son of God: *"He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Belief on Christ's name means more than simple admiration for his name. Belief on the name of Christ really means belief in the nature, character, and personality of Christ. Likewise, when we pray in Jesus' name, we must pray in the character, spirit, and attitude of Jesus.*

In all of the above passages, 'name' refers to the nature, character, personality, or spirit of the bearer of the name. When the phrase 'to hallow' is used, it means 'to regard as different'. Thus when we put these two thoughts together and interpret the meaning of 'Hallowed Be Thy Name', we come out with something like this (as Barclay notes) "Enable us to give to Thee the unique place which Thy nature and character deserve and demand."

B. Message of the Words

We have tried merely to look at the meaning of the words in an attempt better to understand this petition. Let us go a few steps further to try to understand the essential message and application of these words. We said that the phrase 'Hallowed Be Thy Name' really means, "Enable us to give to Thee the unique place which Thy nature and character deserve and demand." When we closely investigate this, we can see that this really is a prayer for reverence. In other words, when we pray "Hallowed Be Thy Name", we are really praying that we will be enabled to reverence God as God deserves to be revered. If this is a prayer for reverence, we must seek to understand the real meaning of reverence and the essentials of reverence.

1. Definition of Reverence.

Says Barclay: "Reverence is knowledge plus submission." (Matthew, p. 210) Certain knowledge leads to submission to God, but it is the submission itself that is the essence of reverence. To illustrate this definition, look at certain Biblical characters.

After Jacob awakened from his dream, he said, *"Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."* Jacob was afraid, and said *"How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."* (Genesis 28: 16, 17)

At the burning bush, God said to Moses, *"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where on thou standest is holy ground...I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* How did Moses react to this experience? He reacted with awe and submission. In other words, he reacted in reverence: *"And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."* (*Exodus 3: 5, 6*)

Perhaps the most classic example of a man who reacted to God with great awe and respect is Isaiah. Following is the record:

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." ⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Thus we see that the definition of reverence is knowledge plus submission. There can be no true reverence for God without submission. However, it might be asked what knowledge is essential before a man will permanently submit himself to God. Therefore, it is important to more carefully consider the essentials of reverence.

2. Essentials of Reverence

It has been pointed out that submission is the very essence of reverence. But before one submits himself to God, what convictions must he have concerning God?

- (a) Conviction of God's Existence. First and most simply, no man will ever submit himself to God until he is convinced that God truly exists. Because the agnostic doubts the very existence of God, he can act very casually and profanely towards God, religion, and the Church.

The basic assumption and axiom of the Bible is that God exists. No where does the Bible attempt to prove God’s existence. To the Biblical character, God’s existence is as real as the air he breathes. To him, all of nature is pervaded by God’s presence, and every flower, tree, and blade of grass is God’s reflection. God is so real to the Biblical character that he declares a man to be a fool if he denies God’s existence.

Many are the evidences for God’s existence. One of the most obvious evidences for God’s existence is the orderly universe in which we live. What else but an intelligent mind could construct such a vast and orderly universe? Therefore ‘order presupposes mind’. It is harder to believe that the orderly universe is the product of chance than it is to believe that the universe is the product of an Eternal Mind. That Mind is God.

- (b) Conviction of God’s Righteous Character. Is it little wonder that the heathen find it difficult to reverence their pagan Gods who are characterized as hateful, jealous, adulterous, capricious, and impure?

Before one can submit himself to God, he must be convinced that God is worthy of his submission. It is a basic conviction of the Bible that the true God is holy and righteous in His character. As Walters’s notes, “Holiness implies moral excellence. It is not just that God is removed from that which is common and bad, but that He is, intrinsically and inherently the highest good that can be...We see that when the Bible speaks of holiness in God, it means His great otherness; his separation from the common; it means His moral excellence and purity; and it means the brightness and radiance which is associated with him.” (“Christening the Christian” – Address by Stanley D. Walters; pgs. 2 and 3)

Says the Psalmist about God’s moral character: *“They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all His works.”* (Psalms 145: 7-9) A conviction of God’s righteous and holy character is essential for submission.

- (c) Conviction of God’s Omnipresence. As one said, “For reverence there is necessary a constant awareness of God.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 208) The Psalmist acknowledged God’s omnipresence when he declared: *“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I*

make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Psalms 139: 7-10)

God is everywhere; therefore it is possible for one to have a constant awareness of God. To permanently submit oneself to God, one must have a constant awareness of God's presence. Susanna Wesley had a prayer: "Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the church or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Thy presence." (Barclay's Matthew, Vol. 2: p. 180.)

Brother Lawrence who lived in the seventeenth century was one who learned to practice the presence of God. For many years he worked as a monastery cook, but he learned to fellowship with God in the kitchen as well as in the closet. Said Brother Lawrence, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament." (The Practice of the Presence of God; p. 6)

CONCLUSION:

What can we say by the way of summary about this petition "Hallowed Be Thy Name"?

We have pointed out that this is a prayer to be enabled to give to God the place in our lives that His character and nature demand and deserve. In other words, it is a prayer to be enabled to reverence God as God deserves to be revered.

What is reverence? It is knowledge plus submission. Submission to God is brought about through different convictions – conviction of God's existence, conviction of God's righteous character, conviction of God's omnipresence. On the basis of our knowledge of God, may we be enabled to give to God the place in our lives that He deserves?

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CHAPTER 4 – Pray This Way

***“Thy Kingdom Come”*. (Part 1)**

CHAPTER 4 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Thy Kingdom Come”*. (Part 1)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Let Your Kingdom come.”* (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

“To grasp what is meant by the Kingdom of God is to come very close to the heart of the Bible’s gospel of salvation.” (John Bright)

PROPOSITION:

Before we can appreciate Jesus’ teaching of the Kingdom of God, we must spend considerable time studying the development of the idea in the Old Testament.

I. Misinterpretation of the ‘Kingdom of God’

A. Development of the Messianic Concept

1. Formulation of Messianic Concept
2. Prophetic Development of Messianic Concept (8th century prophets)
3. Exilic Development of Messianic Concept
4. Post-Exilic Development of Messianic Concept

B. Development of Covenant Concept

1. Israel’s Election
2. Israel’s Covenant Obligation
3. Israel’s Abuse of Covenant
4. Israel’s Rejection by God

CONCLUSION:

Herein lies the misinterpretation of the ‘Kingdom of God’ – identifying the coming Messiah as a great son of David, and assuming that the Kingdom of Israel is the Kingdom of God. It was with these two false conceptions that Jesus had to deal in His teachings regarding the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – “Thy Kingdom Come”. (Part 1)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: “Let Your Kingdom come.” (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

Says Barclay: “The phrase ‘Thy Kingdom of God’ is characteristic of the whole New Testament. There is no phrase which is used oftener in prayer and in preaching and in Christian literature. It is, therefore, of primary importance that we should be clear as to what it means.” (Barclay’s Matthew; v. 1; p. 210)

Mark’s Gospel begins with the significant words: “*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.’*” (1: 14-15) Jesus often spoke of the Kingdom of God and spoke of it as being of paramount importance. And yet Jesus merely assumed that all who heard the phrase would understand it, as indeed the Jews did. However, to modern man, the phrase has little meaning.

The importance of understanding this phrase cannot be emphasized enough. Indeed, as John Bright has pointed out, “To grasp what is meant by the Kingdom of God is to come very close to the heart of the Bible’s gospel of salvation.” (The Kingdom of God; p. 7)

One cannot appreciate the phrase – The Kingdom of God – as it is used in the New Testament without some understanding of the Old Testament history behind this concept. In fact, it is this concept – The Kingdom of God – which gives an overall unity to the Bible. It is this concept, with all of its development that ties the Old and the New Testaments together.

PROPOSITION:

In this message we will seek to trace the development of the concept through the Old Testament, and show how the idea of the ‘Kingdom of God’ was misinterpreted. Before we can appreciate Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God, we must spend considerable time studying the development of the idea in the Old Testament. To appreciate its proper interpretation, we must first seek how it was improperly interpreted in the Old Testament.

I. Misinterpretation of the ‘Kingdom of God’

To understand how the idea of the ‘Kingdom of God’ was often misinterpreted in the Old Testament times, we must trace the development of the Messianic concept, and we must also note the development of the Covenant concept.

A. Development of the Messianic Concept

1. Formulation of Messianic Concept.

The formulation of the Messianic concept was wrought about through the wistful longings of the Israelite people during the dark days of their nation’s decline. Israel wistfully longed for a king who would reign like King David. David was Israel’s greatest king and it was David who reigned during the Golden Age of Israel’s history. David was idolized as the ideal king who gave Israel military, political, material, and spiritual success. Ever after David, the people of Israel looked back upon his age as the ideal age and upon David as the ideal King.

R.V.G. Tasker well summarizes the early beginnings of the Messianic idea. “At first after the establishment of the monarchy, because Utopia is usually fashioned after the form of government familiar to the dreamer, it was thought that the Kingdom when it came would be inaugurated by an ideal king born of the lineage of King David, who would be the visible representative on earth of God Himself, God’s anointed one, or ‘Christ,’ who would always seek to do God’s will, ruling in no self-seeking spirit, but solely for God’s glory. So the coming of the Kingdom is usually associated in the days before the exile with the coming of a Messiah, a son of David, a Christ.” (The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels; p. 63)

2. Prophetic Development of Messianic Concept (8th century prophets)

At the time that the great 8th century B.C. prophets (Amos, Micah, and Isaiah) spoke, Israel had descended to a level of complacency and indulgence. Society was sick with many diseases – social injustice, personal indulgence, religious corruption, political violence. Religious ceremony was a substitute for sound, ethical practice. There was a naïve confidence that God was for Israel and therefore there was no reason to be alarmed.

It was the prophetic duty to shake the people out of their complacency and to warn them of God’s justice and judgment. A few heeded; most didn’t. It was the prophets’ thankless job to tell Israel that God’s judgment would be severe on the unrepentant nation, and that Israel’s enemies would be God’s instruments for that punishment! God’s

purpose would not be frustrated however, for there would always be a purified remnant through which God would work out His purposes.

Because the period of the eighth century (B.C.) prophets was a period of national decline accompanied with the decay of the monarchy (which up to this time had been the source of inspiration for the Messianic concept), "It was very natural that, when these prophets painted their word-pictures of the Kingdom of God, less emphasis should be given by them to the king of the house of David who should inaugurate it, and that the description of that blessed Messianic age should be given in more general terms." (Ibid; p. 66)

The description of the Messianic Age was given in more general terms mainly because there was a lack of confidence in the possibility of a human agent having the ability to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. In this uncertain time, when the foundation of the monarchy was quaking and cracking, there was the feeling that no son of David could establish the Kingdom of God, but that only God Himself could bring salvation and deliverance. During this eighth century the 'Kingdom of God' became less and less associated with the monarchy and with a human agent, and was described more and more in general terms with God Himself as the agent for its establishment. As Tasker says, "The idea of a king, the son of the house of David, falls more and more into the background." (Ibid; p. 66)

3. Exilic Development of Messianic Concept.

During the period of the exile the idea of a coming Kingdom underwent the most profound changes. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the exile of the majority population, and the resultant consequence of no longer being able to worship according to the old ways, all were happenings which caused a radical re-thinking of Messianic idea. As Tasker says, "It was obvious that the old narrow Messianic hopes of an earthly king reigning at Jerusalem had to be modified under the momentous changes, which had taken place in the national life...But with the exile in Babylon, not only did the cultus of the Temple services cease, thereby opening the way for the emphasis laid by Jeremiah and Ezekiel upon personal religion, but the monarchy ceased as well...The more such prophets stressed their teaching of the new covenant, in which God dealt immediately and directly with each individual soul without any mediator, the more clear it became that the Kingdom of God could not be inaugurated by any being who in the least resembled an earthly king, even the great King David; but that it would only come by the direct intervention of God." (Ibid; pgs. 66, 67, 68)

4. Post-Exilic Development of Messianic Concept.

In the early post-exilic period, the Jews realized that the Kingdom of God could not be inaugurated or established by a human being, but that God Himself or some mysterious divine being appointed by God could only establish the Kingdom of God. In the book of Daniel, the description of a son of man is given. This mysterious son of man is given. This one is described as coming on the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom: *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”* (Daniel 7: 13, 14) It was this title – Son of Man – which Jesus preferred more than any other Messianic title. It was the term used to designate the Divine being who would inaugurate God’s Kingdom.

In later post-exilic times – the period just before Christ came to earth - laws were codified (arranged in systematic collections) and religion became more legal, formal, and rigid than ever before. “The old idea of the Messiah as an earthly king who would slay his enemies, not only lingered, but became again the most popular one...No longer were the prophets but the scribes of the Pharisees the religious teachers of the multitude; and they were laying upon men’s shoulders burdens too great to be borne.” (Ibid; p. 71)

We have endeavored thus far to gain a better appreciation of the Messianic concept as it developed throughout the Old Testament history of the Israelite people. One is justified in carefully tracing that development when one realizes that much of Jesus’ teaching about the Kingdom was built off of Old Testament concepts. To understand what the Jews believed about the Messiah and about the Kingdom of God, is to better appreciate Jesus’ teachings regarding the Kingdom, for Jesus was a Jew and He spoke in Jewish categories, assuming that His Jewish hearers had an understanding of popular Jewish concepts. What has been said, is for the purpose of supplying basic and popular Old Testament concepts which will aid us in developing a proper understanding of the New Testament idea of ‘The Kingdom of God’.

Before we can discuss the New Testament idea of ‘The Kingdom of God’, we must further lay the foundation. To better prepare us for a study of the New Testament phrase ‘Thy Kingdom Come’, we will look at one other Old Testament concept – The Covenant.

B. Development of Covenant Concept

1. Israel's Election.

At the very heart of Jewish faith was the belief that Israel was God's chosen people. "The Bible story traces this history of election back to Abraham, but it was in the Exodus events that Israel saw her real beginnings as a people. The memory of the Exodus towered over the national consciousness for all time to come." (The Kingdom of God; p. 27) God elected Israel as His special people through whom He sought to accomplish His purposes in history. *"And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."* (Exodus 6: 7) The writer of Deuteronomy says to Israel: *"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."* (Deuteronomy 7: 6)

2. Israel's Covenant Obligation.

God made a covenant with Israel. Israel was chosen by God from all the nations of the earth as God's special instrument through which He would work out His purposes. However, it is important to note that Israel was not chosen on the basis of her own merit or on the basis of any inherent worth that she possessed. God's covenant relationship with God was an act of God's grace and love and was not made with Israel because she was any better than any other nation.

Israel's Exodus from Egypt was the outstanding event of God's grace and favor by which Israel became solidified as God's chosen people. It was this great historical act of mercy which was meant to constantly remind Israel of God's loving kindness.

God's covenant with Israel was a bilateral contract – not between equals – but nevertheless a contract involving mutual obligations. God promised to deliver Israel from her enemies and to preserve her as His special instrument, if Israel would simply pledge loyalty and show gratitude to its God.

Israel enjoyed an unprecedented privilege – the honor of being God's chosen people and of enjoying God's protection and defense. However, Israel's covenant with God assumed a major obligation – Obedience and Gratitude.

3. Israel’s Abuse of Covenant.

What was the main failure of Israel? Israel failed because of her preoccupation with her special election combined with an accompanying disregard for her covenant obligations. “In short, the whole notion of covenant and election had been made a mechanical thing, the deeply moral note inherent in it blurred and obscured. It had been forgotten that the covenant was a bilateral obligation, requiring of its people the worship of Yahweh alone and the strictest obedience to his righteous law in all human relationships. Or if the obligation was remembered at all, it was imagined that lavish sacrifice and loyal support of the shrines discharged it...And religion was accorded an altogether pagan function: to coerce the favor of God by the sedulous manipulation of the ritual so that protection and material benefit might be secured for individual and nation.” (Kingdom of God; p. 64)

Israel was substituting lavish sacrifices for moral rectitude and justice. No amount of religious ceremony can take the place of justice and righteousness.

*²¹ "I hate, I despise your religious feasts;
I cannot stand your assemblies.*

*²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.*

*Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, ^[a]
I will have no regard for them.*

*²³ Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.*

*²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5: 21-24)*

Israel failed because she failed to be guided by her covenant obligations - brotherly love, mercy, justice, humility, and gratitude. No amount of religious ceremony could substitute for these qualities.

*⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?*

*⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

*⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6: 6-8)*

Not even the prophetic challenge could crack Israel’s naïve and false confidence in her special election. Israel failed to realize that her covenant relationship was not automatic and mechanical but that it was bilateral and moral. Israel failed to realize that her special election involved moral imperatives. Israel’s election was for responsibility. Therefore, to flaunt these responsibilities brings special judgment. Said God to Israel: *“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”* (Amos 3: 2)

4. Israel’s Rejection by God.

The exile proved to Israel that her covenant with God had moral stipulations and requirements, which, if flaunted or disregarded brought their judgment and punishment. God’s rejection of the Israelite state taught the Jews that the Kingdom of Israel was not identical with the Kingdom of God. How shocking was God’s prediction of Israel’s destruction: *“Behold the eyes of Lord Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth.”* (Amos 9: 8a; Bright)

God’s rejection of Israel by God is not final or complete, for God will always have a purged remnant through which He will accomplish His purposes. As the pages of Old Testament history pass over into New Testament reality, we learn that the Church of Christ – the New Israel – becomes that cleansed remnant through which God works His redemptive purposes.

CONCLUSION:

We have traced the Messianic concept through the main periods of Old Testament history. The Messianic concept took on various forms with the ebb and flow of historical events. We briefly summarize those various forms: (a) After the formation of the monarchy and the ascendancy of David to the throne of Israel, Israel’s glory declined and her territory became the battleground for sectional strife. During these days of darkness and decline, Israel’s hope of a Messiah was described in terms of a great son of David. (b) Because the monarchies was cracking at its very foundation, and because Israel’s kings were corrupt, the coming Kingdom was described in more general terms with less emphasis upon the coming Messiah as a great son of David. (c)

During the exile, the monarchy was destroyed and confidence in a human agent as the establisher of the Kingdom was shattered. If the Kingdom of God was to ever be fully realized, God Himself would have to be the Agent and Inaugurator. (d) In the early post-exilic period it was thought that God would appoint some mysterious being – the son of man as Daniel called him – who would establish the kingdom. (e) During the time just before Christ came on the scene of history, the Messianic concept had relapsed into the old idea of the Messiah as an earthly king who would slay his enemies. It was this concept of the Messiah that was popular when Jesus came forth into Galilee preaching about the Kingdom.

We have also traced the development of the covenant concept. (a) The Jews believed that they were the chosen people of God. They were elected by God. (b) Israel's covenant with God involved obligations as well as privileges. (c) Israel's failure was her naïve preoccupation with election at the expense of forgetting her covenant obligations. (d) God's rejection of Israel proved to Israel that she was not the true Kingdom of God.

Herein lies the misinterpretation of the 'Kingdom of God' – identifying the coming Messiah as a great son of David, and assuming that the Kingdom of Israel is the Kingdom of God. The former mistake was corrected at times during Israel's history but was continuing to persist as the New Testament narrative was begun. The latter mistake was corrected by the exile but the rudiments of this false conception were still existent in the New Testament. It was with these two false conceptions that Jesus had to deal in His teachings regarding the Kingdom of God. With the background of this message, let us not attempt to understand the true meaning of the Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught it. To this subject we move in the next message. (Thy Kingdom Come – Part II)

CHAPTER 5 – Pray this way

“Thy Kingdom Come” (Part II)

CHAPTER 5 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray this way “*Thy Kingdom Come*” (Part II)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: “*Let your kingdom come.*” (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

Why did so many Jews refuse to see their hopes and dreams fulfilled in Jesus? It was because so many Jews had relapsed back into the old and incorrect ideas regarding the Messiah and the Kingdom.

PROPOSITION:

It is the true meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God’ that we are concerned in trying to understand.

I. Meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God’

A. King of the Kingdom

1. Miracles
2. Parables
3. Messianic Titles
4. Resurrection

B. Members of the Kingdom

1. What really is the meaning of the Kingdom of God?
2. Who really are the members of the Kingdom of God?

CONCLUSION:

“To pray for the Kingdom of Heaven is to pray that we may submit our wills entirely to the will of God.” (William Barclay)

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: Pray this way “Thy Kingdom Come” (Part II)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: “Let your kingdom come.” (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

We have seen how that for centuries the Jews longed and looked for a Messiah who would establish his reign of righteousness and power. At times during Israelite history, the Jews expected the coming Messiah to be a great son of David who would establish a Golden Age greater even than that which David established. At other times when the monarchy was weak or non-existent, the Jews lost confidence in the possibility of a human agent and turned to God as the only possible Agent for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. At their best, the Jews realized that the Kingdom of God was separate from the Kingdom of Israel, and at their best the Jews realized that the Agent for the establishment of that Kingdom would have to be God Himself or at least some mysterious divine being which God would appoint.

It is to the New Testament that we must turn in order to see the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and dreams. Why did so many Jews refuse to see their hopes and dreams fulfilled in Jesus? It was because so many Jews had relapsed back into the old and incorrect ideas regarding the Messiah and the Kingdom. The old idea that the Kingdom of God was in some way inseparably connected with the Kingdom of Israel, and the old idea that the coming Messiah would be a great human heir of David, both regained popularity in Jewish thought just preceding the ministry of Jesus.

To understand these popular Jewish beliefs regarding the Messiah and the Kingdom of God, is to better understand the difficulty Jesus had in convincing the Jews that He indeed was the fulfillment of all of the Messianic hopes and dreams.

PROPOSITION:

To the subject of the ‘Kingdom of God’ as it was taught by Jesus, we must now turn. It is the true meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God’ that we are concerned in trying to understand. To understand Jesus’ teaching regarding the Kingdom, we can more intelligently pray ‘Thy Kingdom Come.’ The simple outline for the message is as follows: (a) King of the Kingdom, (b) Members of the Kingdom.

I. Meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God’

A. King of the Kingdom

When Jesus came into Galilee he said, *“The appointed time has fully come. The Kingdom of God has arrived.”* Jesus was really saying that the far-off Divine Event which the Jews for centuries had longed to see, was now clearly before their eyes and was being fulfilled. He was saying that He was the fulfillment of Jewish dreams and hopes. In many passages Jesus stated that the Kingdom of God had arrived. *“If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.”* (Luke 11: 20) *“The Kingdom of God is in your midst”.* (Luke 17: 21) *“The tax collectors and harlots are going into the Kingdom of God before you.”*(Matthew 21: 31) *“Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.”* (Matthew 21: 31) *“Blessed are the eyes which see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.”* (Luke 10: 23) *The queen of the south will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”* (Luke 11: 31) It was Jesus’ teaching that the Kingdom of God had arrived. Jesus claimed to be the King of the Kingdom. Jesus’ Kingdom power was manifested in various ways. Let us look at the words and works that were meant to demonstrate His Messianic power.

1. Miracles.

The miracles were not for the purpose of creating a sensational response to Christ. Nevertheless, in a real way, the miracles were meant to be signs which lended evidence that Jesus truly was the Messiah. The miracles were acts of compassion, but their purpose was even greater than this. The true purpose of the miracles was to actively demonstrate that the Kingdom of God had arrived. As A.M. Huner so well puts it: *“The healing of the sick, the exorcism of evil spirits, the restoration of the maimed, the deaf, the dumb and the blind, the forgiveness of sins – all these were ‘works’ of the Kingdom...In one phrase, the miracles were the Kingdom of God in actions.”*

2. Parables.

The parables which Jesus told can only properly be understood as teachings regarding the coming Kingdom of God. Each parable talks about a different aspect of that Kingdom but each relates in some way to the Messianic Rule, and the true meaning of the Kingdom. The parable of the Mustard Seed serves as one example. Hunter points out that this parable essentially is saying: *“The Reign of God, now like a small seed in your midst, will one day become a tree overshadowing the earth.”* (Ibid; p. 30) Each parable is meant to tell its hearers that the Kingdom of God is now actively working in their midst.

3. Messianic Titles

The title by which Jesus most liked to be called was ‘the Son of Man’. There are about three dozen examples of Jesus’ usage of this title in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). We have seen in the preceding message to this one, that this title – Son of Man – was a Messianic title used especially in the book of Daniel: “¹³ *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.* ¹⁴ *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*” (Daniel 7: 13-14)

Jesus also assumed another title – the Suffering Servant – a title which is taken from Isaiah 52, 53. The suffering servant is described by Isaiah as one who really does God’s will on earth. Jesus took this title to describe Himself.

Jesus did that which was unique, something which no one else had ever done – He combined the two titles of Son of Man and Suffering Servant and used these titles to perfectly summarize His ministry. To the Jew these two titles described two different concepts. ‘Son of Man’ described the triumphant Messiah. ‘Suffering Servant’ described the despised servant whose role was not earthly greatness but suffering and sacrifice. And yet Jesus used both titles when “He taught that the Son of Man must suffer.” Says Father Hebert: “No one dared to think of the Messiah as suffering and dying, till He Himself did so. It is He (Jesus) who broadens out the Messianic idea, till it is seen to gather up in itself all Old Testament theology.” (The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels; p. 70)

Thus, we see that Jesus’ title of ‘Son of Man’ was a title of Messianic power. However, Jesus’ combination of this title with the title of ‘Suffering Servant’ changed the concept of the Messiah drastically! Jesus power as the Messiah would not be in terms of military power, but quite the contrary – it would be in terms of the Power of love which would find its expression in the experience of suffering and sacrifice. Jesus came to show the true meaning of the ‘Messiah’. The Messiah must suffer, not seek revenge. The Messiah must love, not hate. The Messiah must save, not conquer. The Messiah must rule by love in the hearts of men, and not rule by hate over the Jews’ earthly enemies. The Messiah’s Kingdom would be established on the foundation of suffering and sacrifice, not on the foundation of military force and arms. Jesus came to show the true meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God’.

4, Resurrection

Jesus’ works and words and Messianic titles were all meant to be demonstrations of the King’s right to reign. However, the most conclusive evidence of Jesus’ Messianic power was the resurrection. Jesus conclusively demonstrated His power over Satan by His power over death. Thus the resurrection shows that Jesus is the true Messiah and that He alone has the right to reign over heaven and earth. Jesus’ resurrection is the greatest demonstration of Messianic power, and spells the ultimate defeat of Satan. Jesus’ resurrection has potentially put an end to death for every man, and potentially gives power to every man to become a member of the Kingdom of God.

B. Members of the Kingdom.

In our discussion thus far, we have talked extensively about the King of the Kingdom, but perhaps we have not yet satisfactorily answered the question, “What really is the meaning of the Kingdom of God?”

1. What really is the meaning of the Kingdom of God?

Let us offer a two-fold definition to the ‘Kingdom of God’. First, as Hunter says, “To understand the phrase in the Gospels, we must remember that it means, linguistically, the kingly Rule of God and that it implies the Biblical idea of God, the God who acts, whose workshop is history and who is working out a great and gracious purpose in it to an appointed end.” (Introducing New Testament Theology; p. 26)

The kingly Rule of God naturally results in kingly subjects; thus the Kingdom of God carries the secondary meaning of ‘realm’. Those who submit to the kingly rule of God, are an intimate part of the Kingdom of God. In this connection, however, it is important to realize that “God’s Reign exists, however men respond. (God’s Reign) claims the obedience of men truly; but it is there before the claims are made, and it is still there if men reject them.”) Ibid; pg. 26)

To better appreciate the latter definition, it would be to our advantage to ask the question: “Who really are the members of the Kingdom of God?”

2. Who really are the members of the Kingdom of God?

To answer this, let us go directly to The Lord’s Prayer. Jesus taught us to pray: “Let your Kingdom come: Let your will be done, as in heaven, so also in earth.”

This portion of the Lord’s Prayer is an example of parallelism. “The Hebrew tended to say everything twice. He said it in one way, and then he said it in another way which repeats or amplifies or explains the first way... We then have the perfect definition of the Kingdom of God – The Kingdom of God is a society upon earth where God’s will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven.” (Barclay’s Matthew; pgs. 211, 212)

Thus, everyone of all ages who have sought to do the will of God in their life are members of the Kingdom of God. Membership in the Kingdom of God is not limited to any certain nation, race, or age, but includes all people who have done and all people who do and all people who will do the will of God in their lives. Thus, we see how the Kingdom of God can be past, present, and future all at the same time. Membership in the Kingdom of God is dependent upon the quality of one’s inner life. One becomes a member of the Kingdom when his heart is changed. Membership in the Kingdom of God was understood, at the best, in terms of keeping the covenant. It was finally realized, however, that a change of heart was essential in order to observe the covenant requirements of love and compassion. Thus Jeremiah 31: 31-34, is a high mark of Old Testament thought and revelation:

³¹ "The time is coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to ^[a] them, ^[b] "
declares the LORD.

³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time," declares the LORD.
"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'
because they will all know me,

**from the least of them to the greatest,"
declares the LORD.**

**"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."**

The coming of Christ and the creation of the New Israel were the fulfillment of the 'New Covenant' prophecies. God sent the Holy Spirit to shed abroad His love in the human heart which is the evidence that one has entered into the New Covenant. Love then, is the ethic or standard for the new pattern of living. Christ's death and resurrection established the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit enables one to enter into the New Covenant. The standard for the New Covenant which God established through Jesus Christ is Love and because of this new standard, there is a greater emphasis upon right internal attitudes. The Sermon on the Mount which is the design for life in the Kingdom of God, demands pure motives as well as respectable acts. The standard for membership in God's Kingdom is the standard laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. The Holy Spirit enables us to reach this standard – a standard which is greater than the Old Testament Law.

CONCLUSION:

We have learned that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited-for Messiah. Jesus' Messianic power was shown by his works (miracles) and words (parables). Jesus' assumption of both titles – 'Son of Man' and 'Suffering Servant' – drastically changed the concept of the Messiah from a military hero to a loving Savior. Jesus' power over death resulted in destruction of Satan's works and ultimate defeat of Satan's Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God has two related meanings – Rule and Realm. God's kingly Rule assumes the presence of kingly subjects, but the Rule exists independent of man's response to the Rule. Members of the Kingdom of God include those of all ages who have and who are and who will submit their will to God's will. Thus, as Barclay has pointed out, "To pray for the Kingdom of Heaven is to pray that we may submit our wills entirely to the will of God." (William Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 212, 213)

CHAPTER 6 - Pray this Way

"Thy Will be Done In Earth As It Is In Heaven."

CHAPTER 6 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray this Way – *"Thy Will be Done In Earth As It Is In Heaven."*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *"Let your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth."* (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

When God's will become man's will, God's purpose for the world is fulfilled.

PROPOSITION:

This prayer involves inner submission and also outer commitment.

- I. To Pray 'Thy Will Be Done' involves inner submission.**
 - A. Submission assumes belief in God's wisdom.**
 - 1. God uses 'sunny' experiences to mold character.
 - 2. God sometimes uses 'cloudy' experiences to mold character.
 - B. Submission assumes Belief in God's Love.**

- II. To Pray 'Thy Will Be Done' involves outward commitment.**
 - A. Motives Behind Commitment.**
 - 1. This is a prayer that God will enable us to do His will on earth with the same motives as those in heaven who do His will.
 - 2. This is a prayer that God will strengthen our will to do His perfect will.
 - 3. This then is a prayer that holy motives may issue forth in practical obedience and active involvement.
 - B. Results of Commitment.**

CONCLUSION:

"The maximum achievement of any man's life after it is all over is to have done the will of God. No man or woman can have done any more with a life." (Professor Drummond)

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: Pray this Way – *“Thy Will be Done In Earth As It Is In Heaven.”*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Let your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.”* (Matthew 6:10)

INTRODUCTION:

The life which is patterned after God’s will is the most satisfying life. To face the future with one’s hand clasped in God’s Hand is challenging and reassuring. Each circumstance – be it ‘sunny’ or ‘stormy’ – is used of God to bring good to the trusting soul. Before one can believe that his circumstances are ladders to higher plains of living, he must first be convinced of God’s wisdom and of God’s love. Convinced of God’s wisdom and love, submission to God’s will is much easier. Inner submission to God’s will issues forth in a life of active involvement and commitment. It is God’s will that His Kingdom be established in the hearts of men. When God’s will becomes man’s will, God’s purpose for the world is fulfilled.

PROPOSITION:

Let us carefully note what this prayer involves. (1) This prayer involves inner submission, and (2) this prayer involves outer commitment.

I. To Pray ‘Thy Will Be Done’ involves inner submission.

One cannot honestly pray *‘Thy Will Be Done’* without submission of his will to God’s will. Submission to God’s will assumes that one has confidence in God’s wisdom and confidence in God’s Love.

A. Submission assumes belief in God’s wisdom.

Says Barclay, “Sometimes when we want something built or constructed, or altered or repaired, we take it to the craftsman and consult him about it. He makes some suggestion, and we often end up by saying, ‘Well, do what you think best. You are the expert.’ God is the expert in life, and His guidance can never lead anyone astray.” (Barclay)

Michelangelo was a great sculptor. One time he said that as he viewed a large shapeless block of stone, he envisioned an angel coming out of that rock. Before Michelangelo began shaping a rock, he had a vision in his mind of what that rock was to become. Through his skillful and patient molding, that vision became a reality. God, who is all-wise and all-knowing, has a vision for every man’s life. God has a plan and purpose for each person. When we pray ‘Thy

Will Be Done', we are submitting ourselves before the Hand of the Divine Sculptor to let Him shape and mold our lives according to His divine plan.

1. God uses 'sunny' experiences to mold character.

No flower could grow without sufficient sun. Neither can a life be properly molded without sunny experiences. As one man say, "The good things in life far outweigh the bad. There are more sunrises than cyclones." (God's Psychiatry, p. 104) God often uses the normal and appealing things of life to mold character. The beauty of a flower, the majesty of a mountain, variety of changing seasons are all normal experiences which God uses to mold our esthetic capacities. The warmth of friendship and the joy of kindred are circumstances that mold deep emotional and soul capacities. The challenge of involvement and the offering of talents are situations that mold spiritual capacities. The great majority of circumstances are favorable and appealing to us. In God's great wisdom He uses these circumstances to better our life.

The God of wisdom knows that we sometimes need sunny experiences in order for the bud of our abilities to blossom. There is no fragrance without the flower, and there can be no flower without sufficient sunshine. Sometimes the potential of our lives will never be realize without the sunshine of honor which makes potential talents realized talents. This is not to say that there is no need for clouds, rain, and storms in our lives, but oftentimes there is more need for sunshine than there is for the storm.

God uses the gentle instrument of honor to shape and mold character. Barclay notes an interesting example of how a man's life was molded through the gentle instrument of honor. "Ambrose was one of the great figures of the early Church. He was a great scholar; he was the Roman governor of the province of Liguria and Aemilia, and he governed with such loving care that the people regarded him as a father. The bishop of the district died, and the question of his successor arose. In the midst of the discussion suddenly a little child's voice arose: "Ambrose – bishop! Ambrose-bishop!" The whole crowd took up the cry. To Ambrose it was unthinkable. He fled by night to avoid the high office the Church was offering to him; and it was only the direct intervention and command of the Emperor which made him agree to become bishop of Milan." (Barclay's Philippians; p. 39) This man was inaugurated into office on the wings of honor, and is remembered in church History as a great man.

One man whose potential blossomed in the sunshine of God's high call is Myron F. Boyd. As a youth, he had an impediment in his speech. He was called to preach, but Myron Boyd at first felt that that was the last thing he could do. Some men reinforced Myron Boyd's own conviction, and told him that he would never be able to preach. However, God knew better, for the God who made Myron Boyd knew him better than he knew himself. In God's great wisdom, God called Boyd to preach. He preached on the "Light and Life Hour" Radio program for 20 years to countless multitudes who heard him. Later, he became a Bishop of his denomination!

2. God sometimes uses 'cloudy' experiences to mold character.

If one truly believes in God's wisdom, he will submit not only to the 'sunny' experiences, but he will also submit to the 'cloudy' experiences.

Sometimes God has to use rough mallets as well as delicate and gentle instruments. The Arabs have a proverb: "All sunshine makes a desert." Circumstances which lead to prosperity can be dangerous to some men. As Barclay says, "The danger of prosperity is that it encourages a false independence. It makes us think that we are well able to handle life alone. For every one prayer that rises to God in days of prosperity ten thousand rise to Him in days of adversity. As Lincoln had it, 'I have often been driven to my knees in prayer because I had nowhere else to go.'" (Barclay's Corinthians; p. 192)

God uses the cloudy and stormy experiences to bring ultimate good to the submissive and humble man. Joseph was mistreated by his brothers, but the day came when they bowed before him. Joseph expressed his faith in an all-wise God when he said to his brothers, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*" (Genesis 50: 20)

After great loss, Job was able to make a declaration of faith: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*" (Job 42: 12a)

It is recorded that when Bunyan was due for trial he said: "With God's comfort in my poor soul I went down to the justices, I begged God that if I might do more good by being at liberty than in prison, then that I might be set at liberty. But if not, His will be done." (Barclay's Hebrews; p. 146) Bunyan's words of submission

were possible only because he believed in God's wisdom. Ultimate good came from that submission, for his posterity is blessed with 'Pilgrim's Progress', that he wrote while spending many years in prison, because of his faith in Christ.

To believe in God's wisdom is to submit to God's will even when we don't understand.

**"Lord, that I may learn of Thee,
Give me true simplicity; wean my soul and keep it low,
Willing Thee alone to know.
Let me cast my reeds aside,
All that feeds my knowing pride,
Not to man, but God submit,
Lay my reasoning at Thy feet."
(Prayer and Life's Highest; p. 121)**

Prayed Augustine, "Grant that we may never seek to bend the straight to the crooked- that is Thy will to ours –but that we may bend the crooked to the straight – that is, our will to Thine." (To Tell the World; p. 114) That is the prayer of submission – submission to an all-wise God.

B. Submission assumes Belief in God's Love.

Associated very closely to a belief in God's wisdom, is a belief in God's love. As Barclay says, "We (Christians) do not believe in a mocking and a capricious God, or in a blind and iron determinism." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 214) In the face of an unknown and uncertain future, the Christian is able to submit his will to God's will simply because he knows he is serving an all-wise and all-loving God.

Confidence in God as a God of love is absolutely essential if one is to find out God's will for his life. Why is this? Simply because knowledge of God's will is only learned after one has submitted himself to God. Submission is always a prerequisite to spiritual knowledge. It is only after one can honestly say to God "I gladly accept thy will, regardless of what that will may be," that he can actually come to know God's will. To adopt this submissive attitude, clearly demands a deep conviction in God's love.

The Christian must declare the same triumphant faith that Browning declared:

**"God, Thou art love! I build my faith on that...
I know Thee who has kept my path and made**

Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy.
It were too strange that I should doubt Thy love."
(Barclay's Matthew; p. 215)

Although the future is unknown, the Christian has confidence in God's loving care. Wrote Whittier:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air.
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."
(Ibid; p. 215)

One can commit his very destiny to God because of his conviction that God's love is eternal. God's love will outlast time. That is certainly reason to submit ones will to God's will. "*He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*" (I John 2: 17b)

"All things that are on earth shall wholly pass away
Except the love of God, which shall live and last for aye.

.....

And the great globe itself, so the Holy Writings tell,
With the rolling firmament, where the starry armies dwell,
Shall melt with fervent heat, - they shall all pass away,
Except the love of God, which shall live and last for aye."
Prayer and Life's Highest; p. 125)

II. To Pray 'Thy Will Be Done' involves outward commitment.

We have seen internal submission is important. Submission assumes a belief in God's wisdom and a belief in God's love. We must next note that submission issues forth in active and outward commitment. Let us first note the motives behind commitment and also note the results of commitment.

A. Motives Behind Commitment.

What are we really praying when we pray 'Thy Will Be Done in Earth as it is in Heaven'?

1. This is a prayer that God will enable us to do His will on earth with the same motives as those in heaven who do His will.

What characterizes those who perform God's will in heaven? It is perfect obedience and love for God. When we constantly seek perfection in our

motives and constantly strive to express love to God, we are helping to bring God's Kingdom to earth. To pray 'Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven', is to pray that God will enable us to possess the same spirit of love and obedience as the inhabitants in heaven possess.

God's will is not done in heaven out of a spirit of bitter resignation but out of a heart of active love. This is a prayer that we will perform God's will out of the same motive – love and obedience. To feel compelled to do God's will in a tone of defeated resignation or in a tone of bitter resentment is to do God's will out of the wrong motive. There must be a willing and glad submission to God's will. The attitude of the Christian is: "I delight to do thy will, O God."

- 2. This is a prayer that God will strengthen our will to do His perfect will.**

It is one thing to know and to desire to do God's will, and it is another thing to have the strength actually to do that will. As John Drinkwater wrote:

**"We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees,
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.**

**Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labor as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.**

**Knowledge we ask not – Knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will – there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed."**

(Prayer and Life's Highest; p. 72)

- 3. This then is a prayer that holy motives may issue forth in practical obedience and active involvement.**

To pray 'Thy will be done' involves a willingness to give up one's most valuable possession, in order to advance Christ's cause. "Two men stood on a dock in New York City. They were watching an ocean liner as it left for far-away shores. One of the men said to the other: 'That ocean liner is carrying a gift from me to the mission fields. It

has on it thousands of dollars worth of supplies for a mission hospital'. The other man replied: 'That ocean liner also carries a gift from me to the mission fields. It has on it my only daughter. She is going as a missionary. I have given her to the Lord's service.' Tears came to the eyes of the first man. He said: 'My friend, you have given far more to the Lord than I have, I have given money. You have given your only daughter.'" (Quoted in *This Is the Will of God*; pgs. 57, 58)

B. Results of Commitment.

What is the result of actual and active commitment to God's will? To do God's will with the same motives that the inhabitants do God's will, will result in seeing God's Kingdom further established on earth.

Notes Barclay: "Paul was haunted by the regions beyond. He never saw a ship riding at anchor or moored to the quay but he wished to board her and carry the good news to the regions beyond. He never saw a range of hills blue in the distance but he wished to cross it and to carry the story of Christ to the regions beyond." (Barclay's *Corinthian*; p. 273) Because Paul had a passion to do God's will, he was most influential in establishing many churches and thus seeing God's Kingdom advanced on earth.

Through one of the most influential sermons that was ever preached, William Carey was instrumental in seeing the Baptist Missionary Society formed. In that sermon he made his famous statement: "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." (*God's Psychiatry*; p. 107) William Carey's submission to God issued forth in earnest and practical commitment.

The story of Adoniram Judson is an outstanding illustration of this point. Dr. Boyd tells the story: "When the East India Company would not allow the American missionary, Adoniram Judson, to remain in India, God directed him to Burma. Conditions there were repulsive. Notwithstanding all the difficulties and hardships through which Judson passed, he was used of God in establishing one of the greatest and most successful missions in the world at that time. For nearly one hundred fifty years Judson's heroic sufferings have kindled missionary fires, and quickened missionary zeal in the hearts of multitudes of Christians in every land. God overruled the selfish materialism and hatred of the East India Company and, by fulfilling His own will, brought untold blessings to millions." (*To Tell the World*; pgs. 111, 112)

Livingstone was a great 19th century missionary whose missionary vision for Africa resulted in a great spiritual quest. Livingstone's sole passion was to keep constantly submissive to God's will. On the last day of his life he wrote in his

diary, "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee." (God's Psychiatry; p. 101)

What wonderful examples to follow! To pray that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven is to pray that personal involvement may result in soul-salvation and Kingdom Building. The result of doing God's will is the establishment of God's Kingdom in the hearts of men.

CONCLUSION:

To pray 'Thy Will Be Done' involves inner Submission and it also involves outer Commitment. Professor Drummond says. "The maximum achievement of any man's life after it is all over is to have done the will of God. No man or woman can have done any more with a life." (To Tell the World; p. 116)

**"God's will is peace, and plenty, and the power
To be and have the best that He can give,
A mind to serve Him and a heart to love Him,
The faith to die with the strength to live."
(Ibid; p. 116)**

CHAPTER 7 - Pray This Way

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"

CHAPTER 7 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *"Give us today bread for the coming day"* (Matthew 6:12)

INTRODUCTION:

"In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to bring the whole of life to the whole of God, and to bring the whole of God to the whole of life." (William Barclay)

PROPOSITION:

We will look at both the meaning and the application of this petition.

- I. Meaning of the Petition.**
- II. Application of the Petition**
 - A. Man Is Dependent Upon God**
 - 1. God provides for the Present.**
 - 2. God provides for the Future.**
 - B. God Is Dependent Upon Man**
 - 1. Man must work for provisions.**
 - 2. Man must supply provisions.**

CONCLUSION:

If all people are to be provided with the basic necessities of life, we must remember that man is not only dependent upon God, but that God is also dependent upon man.

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: “Give us today bread for the coming day” (Matthew 6:12)

INTRODUCTION:

Thus far we have studied that part of the Lord’s Prayer which focuses attention upon God. The first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are:

*“Our Father in heaven let your name be held holy;
Let your Kingdom Come;
Let your will be done, as in heaven, so upon earth.”*

These three petitions all contain something about God: (1) God’s love, (2) God’s family, (3) God’s power, (4) God’s holiness, (5) God’s Kingdom, and (6) God’s will.

The last three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are:

*“Give us today bread for the coming day;
Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”*

Says Barclay about the second part of the prayer: “The second part of the prayer, the part of it which deals with our needs and our necessities, is a marvelously wrought unity. It deals with the three essential needs of man, and the three spheres of time within which man moves. First, it asks for bread, thereby asking for that which is necessary for the maintenance of life, and thereby bringing the needs of the present to the throne of God. Second, it asks for forgiveness, thereby bringing the past into the presence of God, and of God’s forgiving grace. Third, it asks for help in temptation, there by committing all the future into the hands of God. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, the past, and the future, all before the footstool of the grace of God...But not only is this carefully wrought prayer a prayer which lays the whole of life in the presence of God; it is also a prayer which brings the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for forgiveness, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future temptation, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way...In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus teaches us to bring the whole of life to the whole of God, and to bring the whole of God to the whole of life.” (Barclay’s Matthew vol. 1; p. 199)

PROPOSITION:

It is the first petition of the second half of The Lord's Prayer which we will look at and study today: *"Give us today bread for the coming day."* Let us first note the real meaning of the petition, and secondly, let us see what is necessary in order for this prayer to be answered. We will look at both the meaning and the application of this petition.

I. Meaning of the Petition

In Barclay's commentary on this passage, he has noted several explanations that have been given for this petition. "(1) The bread has been identified with the bread of the Lord's Supper. (2) The bread has been identified with the spiritual food of the Word of God. (3) The bread has been taken to stand for Jesus Himself." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 215) All of these explanations have their point of truth. However, it is not a spiritual explanation which is the best explanation for the meaning of this passage.

This petition is a simple petition that God will provide food for the coming day. The practical, obvious meaning is the best meaning. As Charles Allen once said "Why try to spiritualize this petition? After all, even a saint must eat. Even our very prayers would die on our lips if we did not have food to sustain our bodies. Jesus preached to the people, He healed the sick, He forgave their sins, and He also used his marvelous power to feed them real bread. Study our Lord's life. You will see He knew something about the everyday struggle to make ends meet. He knew the meaning of the widow's two mites, what a disaster the loss a coin might be, wearing clothes which were patched. He knew about shopping in the grocery store to try to stretch a budget to feed the family. He talks about the housewife who must buy two birds which sold for a penny...In the gray dawn of the morning we see Him on the seashore, His disciples had been fishing all night. Now they were coming in, and the Lord was prepared for them. What did He prepare? A prayer meeting. They needed prayer. A majestic and overwhelming revelation of Himself? They had lost faith in Him. No, He prepared breakfast." (God's Psychiatry; p. 111)

To us affluent Americans, it might be harder for us to understand the urgency in this petition. We have so much but some have so little. It is probably only the man who has really been hungry who can truly understand this petition. Kagawa was such a man. A Japanese Christian man who had a great love for Japanese people, could sympathize with their hunger for he himself experienced hunger pangs. Writes one about Kagawa: "When Kagawa moved into the slums of Kobo he learned that hungry, cold and sick persons need religion in action as well as religion in words. As he shared his meager food allowance with three indigent friends he knew hunger. He, like the others, could not work nor think of much else than the gnawing pangs of hunger. Later, he said that it was then that he began to understand the Lord's Prayer, '*Give us this day our daily bread.*' If you have food and know no hunger you can never understand the Lord's

prayer.” (Kagawa, Japanese Prophet; by J.M. Trout; pgs. 18, 19) Kagawa testifies to this when he writes: “The wolf of poverty unceasingly pursues me – I who am harassed by the devil of disease. All too well do I know the terribleness of the tug of this wolf’s tusk. Hence I am over fleeing at breakneck speed. I cannot tell how far I will make good my escape, but, having somehow succeeded until now, it seems probable that in the future, too, flight will be possible. Come on, O Wolf of Poverty! Come on! I will keep just one step ahead in this furious flight...If God but grants me strength to keep just one step ahead in the flight, I shall continue my present course. When one is on one’s mettle it is possible to keep very near to God. And since nearness to God is for me the greatest of all blessings, despite the frightfulness of this wolf, I will flee until I fall. As regards the far future, that is in God’s hand. Here, blind as I am, though driven to bay by the wolf, with faith in God’s guidance I will run through the dark to the uttermost of my strength. As long as I can make good my escape, my life will be victory-crowned.” (Ibid; p. 23, 24)

Hunger is a very present reality everyday to many people in many countries. The traditional Chinese greeting is, “Have you eaten today?” Writes one person about the adverse conditions in Haiti: “In 90 percent of the houses the people suffer from some kind of disease, the most prevalent being tetanus and tuberculosis (also malaria). About 60 percent of the children die at an early age due to malnutrition. It is heartbreaking to see so many people thin, hungry, and dying of malnutrition, especially children going to bed crying with empty stomachs, without hope for the next day.” Conditions in India are also very bad. Says Thomas Rayner, “I can hardly take a morsel of food without thinking, ‘How can I eat my bread alone’? I know that 30 percent of India goes to bed every single night of the year without one grain of rice or other food in their stomachs.”

When we consider the vast starvation in the world, it is tragic to know that in the United States it is now possible to buy low calorie diets for overweight dogs! How lacking in compassion we Americans are! As Franklin Field says, “Hardening of the heart ages people more quickly than hardening of the arteries.” It may be that it is hard for us to understand the relevancy of this petition in the Lord’s Prayer, simply because we are so fat with our affluence.

II. Application of the Petition.

What is necessary in order for this petition to be answered? When we pray ‘Give us this day our daily bread’, we should be reminded of two things: (a) Man is dependent upon God, (b) God is dependent upon man.

A. Man Is Dependent Upon God

It is hard for us to realize that man is very dependent upon God for present and future provisions. In appreciating how this petition – ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ – is answered, we must realize that man is dependent upon God.

1. God provides for the Present.

It is common acknowledgement that we would never have bread if man had to depend upon his own technological achievement and scientific research. It is God alone who gives life to the seed, fertility to the ground, water for the soil, and sunshine for the plant. Man can analyze life, but only God can give life. Man can harvest the crop, but only God can grow the crop. Man is dependent upon God for his basic necessities. This petition – ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ – has been answered for us, is being answered for us, and will be answered for us, simply because the God of all life cares and provides for man.

“Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill,
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father’s will.”
(God’s Psychiatry; p. 113)

If God can clothe the flowers of the field in garments of unparalleled beauty, and if He cares for the animals of all creation, how much more does he care for man, the crown of His Creation. God cares for the present needs of the animals; how much more does he care for and provide for the present needs of man. God has provided for the present needs of the world. As one said, “The problem of the world is not that there is not enough to go round; there is enough and to spare.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 220)

2. God provides for the Future.

When Jesus teaches us to pray for our ‘daily’ bread, He is teaching us to trust Him for the future. We are meant to live one day at a time and not to worry about the future. Said Jesus, “*I tell you, therefore, do not worry about your life, about what you are to eat, or what you are to drink; and do not worry about your body, about what you are to wear...So, then, do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will worry about itself. Its own troubles are quite enough for the day.*” (Barclay’s Matthew 6: 25, 34) Says Barclay in comment to Jesus’ teachings, “Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, thriftless, reckless, thoughtless,

improvident, attitude to life; He is forbidding a care-worn, worried fear, which takes all the joy out of life.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 258)

God will provide for the future. We can rest assured in that. Many of our worries concerning the future are useless and needless. The story is told of a London doctor who “was paralyzed and bed-ridden, but almost outrageously cheerful, and his smile so brave and radiant that everyone forgot to be sorry for him. His children adored him, and when one of his boys was leaving the nest and starting forth upon life’s adventure, Dr. Greatheart gave him good advice:” ‘Johnny,’ he said, ‘the thing to do my lad, is to hold your own end up, and to do it like a gentleman, and please remember the biggest troubles you have got to face are those that never come.’” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 262)

We are to face the future by facing each day as it comes. God will provide for the day’s needs. God gave Israel manna, one day at a time. The secret to facing the future is to trust God one day at a time.

If God cares for the animals of the field and air and supplies their daily needs, how much more will God supply the needs of our future. One Jewish Rabbi said, “I have never seen a stag as a dryer of figs, or a lion as a porter, or a fox as a merchant, yet they are all nourished without worry. If they, who are created to serve me, are nourished without worry, how much more ought I, who am created to serve my Maker, to be nourished without worry.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 260)

When we pray ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ we are acknowledging our dependence upon God who provides for our present needs and also our future needs. However, in fully appreciating how this petition is answered, we must also realize that God is dependent upon man.

B. God Is Dependent Upon Man

1. Man must work for provisions.

It would be foolish to think that this prayer will be answered by man folding his arms and waiting for God to answer it. Prayer without human co-operation and work is useless and futile. God does not answer our prayers ‘for’ us, but God answers our prayers ‘with’ us. Divine power and human initiative join together to achieve results. God gives life to a seed, but it takes a man to plant the seed. God gives growth to the crop, but it takes a man to cultivate, irrigate, and to harvest the crop. Barclay cites a story to illustrate this. “There was a man who had an

allotment; he had with great toil reclaimed a piece of ground, clearing away the stones, eradicating the rank growth of weeds enriching and feeding the ground, until it produced the loveliest flowers and vegetables. One evening he was showing a pious friend around his allotment. The pious friend said, ‘It’s wonderful what God can do with a bit of ground like this, isn’t it?’ ‘Yes,’ said the man who had put in such toil, ‘but you should have seen this bit of ground when God had it to Himself!’ God’s bounty and man’s toil must combine.” (Barclay’s Matthew, vol. 1; p. 220)

2. Man must supply provisions.

God has provided enough food for all of the world’s inhabitants, but it takes men to distribute the food to the people of the world. Before this prayer can be answered for all people, there is need for more human cooperation. There is enough food for the whole world, but instead of it being distributed, much of it is being wasted. Says Barclay about this: “In America granaries overflow with corn; in Brazil they fire locomotives with blocks of surplus coffee. The problem is not the supply of life’s essentials; it is the distribution of them. This prayer teaches us never to be selfish in our prayers. It is a prayer which we can help God to answer by giving to others who are less fortunate than we are. This prayer is not only a prayer that we may receive our daily bread; it is also a prayer that we may share our daily bread with others.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 220)

“If I have eaten my morsel alone” –
The patriarch spoke in scorn;
What would he think of the church,
Were he shown Heathendom, hugh, forlorn,
Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,
While the Church’s ailment is fullness of bread,
Eating her morsel alone?...

Ever of them who have largest dower
Shall Heaven require the more;
Ours is affluence, knowledge, power,
Ocean from shore to shore;
And East and West in our oars have said,
“Give us; give us your living Bread”;
Yet we eat our morsel alone.

“Freely, as ye have received, so give.”
He bade, who hath given us all;

How shall the soul in us longer live,
Deaf to their starving call,
For Whom the Blood of the Lord was shed,
And His Body broken to give them Bread,
If we eat our morsel alone?”

(Alexander, Primate of Ireland; Compassion Quote; Taken)

Said A. J. Gordon, “I have long since ceased to pray, ‘Lord Jesus, have compassion on a lost world’. I remember the day and hour when I seemed to hear the Lord rebuking me for making such a prayer. He seemed to say to me: ‘I have had compassion upon a lost world. Now it is time for you to have compassion. I have given my heart. Now give your heart.’” Said Job, *“If I have withheld the poor from their desire...or have eaten my morsel myself alone...if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering...then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.”*

A humble Scottish woman had lived for many years on porridge that she might give to missions the cost of her comforts and luxuries. One day a friend gave her a coin to ‘buy a chop,’ he said. She looked at it awhile, and then said, ‘I have got on very well on porridge so far, and I think I’ll just stick to it.’ And so the coin went for missions. The minister was telling this at a missionary breakfast, and a comfortable-looking woman got up and said, ‘Well, I never have done without a chop for Christ’s sake, and so I shall begin today to sacrifice by giving \$1,000 to missions.’ Others followed suit, and before that breakfast was over, \$12,000 had been contributed to missions.”

A noted philanthropist, John Howard, once said, “We must learn to give up our luxuries to supply the comforts of others, our comforts to supply their necessity, and even our necessities to supply their extremities.”

God wants all people of every country to have bread and He has provided enough bread to feed all mouths in the world. It is up to us to distribute that bread. How can we distribute that bread? By giving money to missions.

CONCLUSION:

This petition – ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ – is a petition that must not be merely spiritualized. It is a simple request that God will provide the basic necessities of life.

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

If all people are to be provided with the basic necessities of life, we must remember that man is not only dependent upon God, but that God is also dependent upon man. This petition means that we are to distribute what we have received in order that the less fortunate will be provided with daily bread.

**“Love is the bread that feeds the multitudes;
Love is the healing of the hospitals;
Love is the light that breaks through prison doors;
Love knows not rich, nor poor, nor good nor bad...”
(George Edward Woodberry)**

CHAPTER 8 – Pray This Way

"Forgive Us Our Debts As We Forgive Our Debtors"

CHAPTER 8 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Forgive Us Our Debts As We Forgive Our Debtors”*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”* (Matthew 6: 12)

INTRODUCTION:

The sins of omission become very real to a Christian when he realizes that his labors never repay the debt of love he owes to God.

PROPOSITION:

Let us look carefully at this petition and seek to discover its true meaning.

- I. Purpose of Petition – ‘Forgive Us Our Debts’
 - A. Perfection in Love
 - B. Imperfection in Judgment and Conduct

- II. Proposition In the Petition – ‘As We Forgive Our Debtors’
 - A. Necessity of Forgiving Spirit
 - B. Aids to Forgiving Spirit
 - 1. There is need for Understanding
 - 2. There is need for Forgetfulness
 - 3. There is need for Love

CONCLUSION:

“The Christian must pray this prayer meaningfully to be kept from pride, harshness of spirit, and a score of other attitudes which may subtly overtake those who lose sight of the fact that the treasure of grace is in an earthen vessel.” (Bishop Donald Bastian)

CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – “Forgive Us Our Debts As We Forgive Our Debtors”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: “*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*” (Matthew 6: 12)

INTRODUCTION:

Man has a basic need of forgiveness. The Christian is no exception. The Christian needs constantly to feel that his life is cleansed by Christ’s blood. When guilt plagues the life, physical and mental illness are often times the result, in addition to spiritual illness.

Because the Christian life is a love relationship between man and God, the Christian always feels a sense of debt to God. A Christian is always in debt to God’s love. The sins of omission become very real to a Christian when he realizes that his labors never repay the debt of love he owes to God. Therefore, there is a place in the Christian’s prayer for the petition: “*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*”

PROPOSITION:

Let us look carefully at this petition and seek to discover its true meaning. On our commentary on the phrase – ‘Forgive us our debts’ – we will discuss the purpose of the petition, and in our commentary on the phrase – ‘*as we forgive our debtors*’ – we will discuss the proposition in the petition.

I. PURPOSE OF PETITION – ‘FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS’

The word which is translated ‘debt’ in this petition means ‘a failure to pay that which is due, a failure in duty.’ A genuine Christian never feels that he has been completely successful in fulfilling his duty to God and man. There is no man who perfectly attains unto the holy standard of God. Therefore, it is the Christian’s duty to confess his weaknesses, limitations, and failures in duty. There are two kinds of perfection – the perfection in love and the perfection in judgment and conduct. The Bible teaches that it is possible for man to attain unto perfection in love. However, the Bible does not teach that man will be perfect in judgment and conduct while residing on this earth. In our attempt to better understand the purpose of this petition, let us briefly discuss these two types of perfection.

A. Perfection In Love.

Jesus commanded Christians to be perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect (Matthew 5: 48). Surely Christ was not expecting man to be perfect in every way as God Himself is perfect. By nature, God alone is absolutely perfect.

In comparison to God, man is very imperfect. What then did Jesus mean when He commanded man to be perfect? Surely, in comparison to God, man can only enjoy a relative perfection. The perfection which Jesus expects of man, is the perfection of love. Jesus commanded man to be perfect in love: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* (Matthew 22: 37-40) Paul preached love also: *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*

In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul spoke of two kinds of perfection. In Philippians 3: 12 he says: *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."* In Philippians 3: 15 he says, *"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect."* Paul did not claim to be perfect in judgment and conduct, but Paul did claim to be among that group who claimed perfection in love.

The Bible does teach that one can be perfect in love. The Bible does teach that one can be delivered from the carnal traits of the flesh and mind. The Bible does teach, as John Church has noted, that God can deliver one from the fit of anger, the fit of the pouts, the fit of jealousy, and the fit of stubbornness. The Bible does teach that man can be enabled to have harmonious and loving relationships with his fellowmen.

B. Imperfection In Judgment and Conduct

While man may be perfect in love, he will never be perfect in judgment and conduct. Such perfection belongs only to God. The most sanctified man will make errors in judgment and conduct.

As has already been pointed out, every Christian must confess his faults and blunders and his failures in duty. What man can say that he could not have done more for God, or more for his fellowmen? Who can claim to have always performed perfect service to God and man? With the best of intentions, man can blunder and falter in judgment and conduct.

How often we make hasty judgments of people without sufficient knowledge even to form a judgment. What a different world this would be if we would restrain ourselves and withhold any judgment on others.

"Has God deserted Heaven?
And left it up to you,
To judge if this or that is right,
And what each one should do?"

I think He's still in business,
And knows when to wield the rod,
So when you're judging others,
Just remember, you're not – God.”
(God's Psychiatry; p. 116)

As Christians, we sometimes expect more of people than what God Himself expects of them. Many Christians have pronounced judgment upon a person, only to find out later that such judgment was unjust and the cause of humiliation.

John R. Church tells an incident out of the life of D.L. Moody when Moody was at a Mission in Chicago one Sunday afternoon. “When he walked in (the mission), there was a man on the floor testifying to what God had done for him. He had been saved from a life of drunkenness and vile sin. Mr. Moody said that there was a glory and radiance about the man that was heavenly, and that he had never felt the power of God more in a person's testimony. Mr. Moody made up his mind that he wanted to know this man better. He went up and got acquainted, and they decided they would walk back up town together. When they came out of the Mission and started up town the man stopped and bought some fruit at a stand on the street. Mr. Moody was shocked that the man should break the Sabbath by buying something that was unnecessary. He began to feel that the man might not be such a great saint after all. Then the Holy Spirit checked him and reminded him of the fact that this man had just come from a life of vile sinfulness, and that he did not have the teaching and the background that Mr. Moody had. The remembrance of this saved him from judging the brother too harshly. If we would only do the same it would make us more charitable toward our fellow man.” (Earthen Vessels; pgs. 12, 13)

We need to ask God to forgive us when we fail to give to our fellowmen, the benefit of the doubt. We need to ask God to forgive us when we play the role of judge, a role which belongs solely to God.

We are not only imperfect in judgment, but oftentimes we are very imperfect in conduct. A sanctified Christian's imperfect conduct can give offense to his fellowmen. Impulsive language and impatient conduct is the plight of even the sanctified Christian. Patience is a trait that every Christian must cultivate in his life. The Christian seeks, throughout his entire life time, to improve his conduct. Wrote Peter, “*And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness' and to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*” (II Peter 1: 5-7)

Sharp differences in opinion can sometimes sever-strong-willed Christians. The contention between Paul and Barnabas was so great that they parted company John Mark going with Barnabas and Silas going with Paul. Later, however, Paul wrote saying, *"Bring John Mark with you, for he is profitable unto me."* Says John Church about this, "He (Paul) confessed that he was wrong and Barabbas was right. To my mind that is the real proof that you have the right kind of experience, when you are willing to confess and to make things right. It is human to err, but a real mark of greatness is the willingness to confess and to make things right!" (Earthen Vessels; p. 39)

John Church goes on to give an illustration of how a sanctified person can be wrong in his conduct, and what a sanctified Christian should do in such a case. "I think if I have ever seen a person who was really sanctified, that person was 'Uncle Buddie' Robinson. He was one of the sweetest, most Christlike men I have ever known; and yet I have heard him tell of a ticket agent who tried his patience so that he spoke too hastily and had to go back and apologize for the way he spoke. Now the fact that he spoke that way was no indication that he had carnality in his heart, but it was merely proof of the fact that he was still human." (Earthen Vessels; p. 39)

If there are outbursts of impatience or other manifestations of human weakness in one's conduct, there should always be the prayer of confession: 'Forgive us our debts'. The Christian may claim perfection in love, but he dare not claim perfection in judgment and in conduct. Therefore, the Christian must pray the prayer of confession.

II. PROPOSITION IN THE PETITION – 'AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS'.

A. Necessity of Forgiving Spirit.

In this petition there is a proposition. When we come to this part of The Lord's Prayer, we might say that we are making a proposition with God. We are proposing to God that He forgive our transgressions and debts "in proportion as we forgive those who have sinned against us." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 223) What a frightening proposition! It means that to hold any grudges against our fellowmen is in reality to forfeit the possibility of our sins being forgiven by God. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 223) What a frightening proposition! It means that to hold any grudges against our fellowmen is in reality to forfeit the possibility of our sins being forgiven by God. As Barclay says, "It is, therefore, quite clear that, if we pray this petition with an unhealed breach, an unsettled quarrel in our lives, we are asking God not to forgive unhealed breach, an unsettled quarrel in our lives, we are asking God not to forgive us." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 223) Therefore, it is essential that we always have a forgiving spirit

if we expect God to forgive us. *“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”* (Mark 11: 25)

One is not fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer if he has an unforgiving spirit “When Robert Lewis Stevenson lived in the South Sea Island he used always to conduct family worship in the mornings for his household. It always concluded with the Lord’s Prayer. One morning in the middle of the Lord’s Prayer he rose from his knees and left the room. His health was always precarious, and his wife followed him thinking that he was ill. ‘Is there anything wrong?’ she said. ‘Only this,’ said Stevenson, ‘I am not fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer today.’ No one is fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer so long as the unforgiving spirit holds sway within his heart. If a man has not put things right with his fellowmen, he cannot put things right with God. (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 224)

B. Aids to Forgiving Spirit.

Barclay suggests three things that are necessary if we are to have this Christian forgiveness. Let us look at each of these things.

1. There is need for Understanding.

How much easier it would be to forgive our fellowmen, if we would seek better to understand the motives for their behavior. Impoliteness may be caused by worry or pain. Suspicion may be caused by misinformation. Impatience may be caused by bad nerves. James Fraser, a missionary who worked hard and prayed intensely for his people, one day lost his temper in the presence of the very people to whom he was ministering. His problem was not primarily spiritual; his problem was physical. He had worked so hard and had prayed so long that he had failed to get sufficient exercise and fresh air. (Alive To God Through Prayer; p. 126)

To understand the cause for one’s behavior is to be aided in developing the forgiving spirit. How much easier it would be to forbear with one another, if we sought to understand the personality make-up and the behavioral motives of those with whom we differ. E. Stanley Jones has a prayer in one of his devotional books that is worthy of our attention: “O God, I come to thee to gain understanding sympathy. I am resentful because I don’t understand. Give me clear insight and sympathy that I may read in the lives of others the things that make them unattractive to me. And when I understand, help me to forgive. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.” (Abundant Living; p. 62)

2. There is need for Forgetfulness.

If God hides our sins in the sea of His forgetfulness, should we not also seek not only to forgive but also to forget the wrongs others have inflicted upon us? We must constantly seek to develop the capacity to forget as well as to forgive. The attitude of E. Stanley Jones would be good for all of us to develop. Someone once said to him, "I don't think you know when you are insulted." Jones replied, "I am not looking for insults and so don't see them." (Abundant Living; p. 63)

Barclay illustrates this point. "One the famous Scottish men of letters, Andrew Lang, wrote and published a very kind review of a book by a young man. The young man repaid him with a bitter, insolent, and insulting attack. About three years later Andrew Lang was staying with Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate. Bridges saw Lang reading a certain book. 'Why', he said, 'that's another book by that ungrateful young cub who behaved so shamefully to you.' To his astonishment he found that Andrew Lang's mind was a blank on the whole affair. He had completely forgotten the bitter and insulting attack. To forgive, said Bridges, was the sign of a great man, but to forget was sublime. Nothing but the cleansing spirit of Christ can take from these memories of ours the old bitterness that we must forget." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 225)

3. There is need for Love.

The greatest aid in developing the forgiving spirit is love. Christian love is not merely a feeling of emotion. Rather, it is a quality which is given by God and which must be exercised by the will. Barclay defines this love as "that unconquerable benevolence, that undefeatable good-will, which will never seek anything but the highest good of others, no matter what they do to us, and no matter how they treat us." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 225)

Stanley Jones tells the story of an Armenian girl who learned to exercise love for an enemy, and was consequently able to forgive. "She and her brother had been attacked by Turks in a lane, and while she had escaped by climbing over a wall, her brother had been brutally killed before her eyes. She was a nurse, and later on while nursing in the hospital recognized one of her patients as the very Turkish soldier who had murdered her brother. Her first feeling was: Revenge! He was very ill, just hovering between life and death. The slightest neglect and he would die. And no one would know. His life was absolutely in her hands. But instead of revenge she decided for Christ's sake to forgive him. She fought for his life and won, nursing him back to health. When he was convalescent, she told him who she was. The Turkish soldier looked at her in astonishment and said, 'Then why didn't you let me die, when you had me in your power?' 'I couldn't,' answered the girl. 'I just couldn't,

for I am a Christian, and my own Master forgave His enemies who crucified Him. I must do the same for His sake.' 'Well,' said the hardened Turk in astonishment, 'if that is what it means to be a Christian, I want to be one.'" (Abundant Living; p. 59)

Love is the greatest aid in forgiving hurts and wrongs. Exercise love then every moment of every day. "Leave vengeance to God – use only redemptive good will." (Ibid; 63)

CONCLUSION:

To ask forgiveness means to acknowledge that we have faults which are hidden from our own eyes, but which are not hidden from the eyes of God and from the eyes of our fellow men. Because the Christian acknowledges that he has errors in judgment and errors in conduct, he will be ready to confess his faults to God and to his fellowmen. Bastian well summaries the purpose of this petition: "In fact, the Christian must pray this prayer meaningfully to be kept from pride, harshness of spirit, and a score of other attitudes which may subtly overtake those who lose sight of the fact that the treasure of grace is in an earthen vessel." (The Mature Church Member; by Bishop Donald Bastian; p. 114)

The preposition in this petition is frightening – forgive us as we forgive! This is a prayer that God will forgive us in proportion as we have forgiven our fellowman. How carefully we should pray The Lord's Prayer! To maintain the forgiving spirit, we must learn to understand the motives by which others behave; we must learn to forget the wrongs which others have done to us; we must learn to return good for evil, thus developing the redemptive good will.

CHAPTER 9 – Pray This Way

“Deliver Us from the Evil One”

CHAPTER 9 - OUTLINE

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – *“Deliver Us from the Evil One”*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”* (Matthew 6:13)

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian commits not only the past with its sins to God; the Christian commits not only the present with its temporal needs to God; but the Christian also commits the future with its threats and temptations to God.

PROPOSITION:

It is important for us to realize what the nature and purpose of temptation is, and it is very important for us to know how we can have victory over temptation.

I. Purpose of Temptation.

II. Victory over Temptation

A. Satan’s Attack

1. Self-preservation is an inherent instinct in man but it can be misused.
2. The desire for social approval is natural but it can be misused.
3. The desire for success is natural but it can be misused.
4. The desire for sexual fulfillment is wholesome but it can be misused.

B. Man’s Reinforcement

1. Vigilance is important because of the subtle forms which temptation takes.
2. Avoidance is important because of the possibility of sinful conformity.
3. Trust is important for God alone has the power to deliver one from Satan’s snares.

CONCLUSION:

God permits us to be tested (tempted) in order that our characters may be refined, and in order that our loyalty to Him might be demonstrated. Temptation is not meant to make us weaker but is meant to make us stronger.

CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: Pray This Way – “Deliver Us from the Evil One”.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

TEXT: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”* (Matthew 6:13)

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian commits not only the past with its sins to God; the Christian commits not only the present with its temporal needs to God; but the Christian also commits the future with its threats and temptations to God. Jesus taught us to pray for deliverance from the snares of the Evil One. Man by himself is unable to overcome the power of Satan and is unable to discern the subtle tactics of Satan. Therefore, man must pray for the help of God. “When we ask for help for future temptation, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 199)

PROPOSITION:

The subject of temptation is very relevant to every man simply because each person experiences temptation. It is important for us to realize what the nature and purpose of temptation is, and it is very important for us to know how we can have victory over temptation. Therefore first we will briefly discuss the purpose of temptation and secondly we will discuss in more detail the victory over temptation.

I. Purpose of Temptation

Barclay very well clarifies the meaning and purpose of temptation. “In its New Testament usage to tempt a person is not so much to seek to seduce him into sin, as it is to test his strength and his loyalty and his ability for service. Now here is a great and uplifting truth. What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes to use.” (Barclay’s Matthew; pgs. 225, 56)

Sometimes it is only in the crucible of life’s difficult experiences that man can be purified. Oftentimes it is only after man has been triumphant in life’s challenging tests that he can meet life with maturity and strength. Life’s tests are for the purpose of purifying character.

**When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.**

To pass one test successfully is to increase one's strength for the next test. The person who has been successful in life's test, is the man whom God can use greatly in His service. Says one, "If metal is to be used in a great engineering project, it is tested at stresses and strains far beyond those which it is ever likely to have to bear. So a man has to be tested before God can use him greatly in his service." (Barclay's Matthew; p. 226)

As has been noted, what we call temptation is not meant to make us weak, but it is meant to make us strong. Tests are for the purpose of purifying and strengthening character in order that one may be better equipped as a servant of God.

For instance, sorrow is not meant to make us bitter, but it is meant to make us sympathetic and understanding. A difficult life experience is not meant to defeat us, but it is meant to make us courageous. When life's tests force us to choose, we are given an opportunity to choose the pathway which leads to greatness and nobility. Life's tests give us an opportunity to choose good instead of evil, truth instead of falsehood, bravery instead of cowardice, generosity instead of selfishness.

When a school child is given an arithmetic test, he is given the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge. The test is not given to him to cause him to fail; it is given to him to demonstrate to him that he is allowed to progress to more advanced math and more difficult tests. God permits us to be tested in order to demonstrate our loyalty to Him and to better prepare us for greater service for him." (Athlete is tested. Hurdles on life's pathway are NOT meant to trip us, but to strengthen us.)

II. Victory over Temptation

In our discussion of victory over temptation, it is important for us to realize the method of Satan's attack, and it is important for us to realize the Christian reinforcements against temptation.

A. Satan's Attack

The petition should not be translated, 'Deliver us from evil,' but it should be translated, 'Deliver us from the Evil One.' (Evil is not an abstract entity, but

evil is a personified power. The Bible speaks of evil in terms of a spiritual person who is in opposition against God and man.)

The Bible speaks of Satan – man’s adversary. The Bible pictures Satan as the Prince of the Power of the Air and he is said to be the leader of a demonic kingdom which is constantly plotting evil against man. Satan is also called the Devil (Matthew 4: 1) which means the slanderer par excellence. Satan is called the Tempter (Matthew 4: 3) who seeks the ruin of mankind. In John 8: 44, Satan is called a murderer and liar. Satan is described as the roaring lion in I Peter 5: 8, and He is called the Wicked One in I John 2: 13. In Revelation 20: 2, he is called the old serpent – reminiscent of Satan’s first appearance to man. He is the robber, stealing the seed of God’s Word out of the Heart of Man (Luke 8: 12). He is called ‘the accuser of the brethren’ (Revelation 12: 10).

The power of Satan in the World is not illusionary but very real. While Luther was in his room in the Castle of the Wartburg in Germany one day, he felt the power of Satan so greatly that he threw his ink-pot at the devil. Robert Louis Stevenson was convinced that Satan was a personal, active power of evil. He said one time: “You know the Caledonian Railway Station in Edinburgh? One cold, east windy morning, I met Satan there.” It is said of Jesus that he “suffered being tempted.” (Hebrews 2: 18) On several occasions Jesus personally encountered Satan.

Perhaps one of the clearest evidences to the reality of Satan’s evil and powerful activity, is man’s denial of God’s existence. Such a statement only confirms that the Devil is alive and actively deceiving the hearts of men.

If Satan is alive (and the evidence is overwhelming that he is), then we must try our best to understand the subtle tactics in his attack on man. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. We dare not be ignorant of his devices. Said Paul, “*We are not ignorant of his devices.*” (II Corinthians 2: 11b)

In understanding the method of Satan’s attack on man, the most essential truth for us to understand is this: Sin is a perversion of natural, legitimate desires. That is to say that Satan attacks man through the channel of his natural and legitimate desires. Satan seeks to twist and to pervert that which is wholesome and natural. To see this truth let us look at specific examples.

1. Self-preservation is an inherent instinct in man but it can be misused.

Without such an instinct, man would fail to see danger when it is present, or would be unable to escape danger when he is aware of it. However, there are times when the instinct of self-preservation should become subject to a greater instinct – the instinct to help another in danger or to

sacrifice life's blood for a noble principle. There are times that it is better to die than to live. It is then that one of life's hardest tests comes – to die is to be a victor in the test but to live is to be a failure in the test. (Example: To be loyal to Christ and die rather than to reject Christ and live is to be victor).

Because of his sense of duty, Nehemiah suppressed his instinct for self-preservation in the face of danger. When it was suggested that he quit his work and shut himself in the Temple until a certain danger was past, Nehemiah said, “Should such a man as I flee? And who is there that, being such as I am, would go into the temple to save his life. I will not go in.” (Nehemiah 6: 11) Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, sought to rescue a drowning person in Schroon Lake, N.Y. and lost his own life as a result. Heroic soldiers have given their lives intentionally to save many of their fellow soldiers. The instinct to save others is greater than the instinct of self-preservation. There may be a time when we are called upon to say ‘No’ to the temptation to save our own life.

2. The desire for social approval is natural but it can be misused.

A sense of worthiness is developed through social approval and is necessary to maintain mental health. Many social-rejects are in state hospitals. It is most natural to want to be a part of a group. It is most natural to have the social urge but this urge can become abnormal and it is then sinful. Such an obsession for social approval can lead to a sacrifice of one's witness, a compromise in one's standards, and even a surrender of one's integrity. “Once President Garfield was urged to take a profitable, but dishonorable, course of action. It was said, ‘No one will ever know.’ His answer was, ‘President Garfield will know – and I've got to sleep with him.’” (Barclay's Matthew; p. 232) One may be tempted to conform to social pressures, but he should always remember that it is better to be at peace with one's self than to be at peace with one's social peers.

3. The desire for success is natural but it can be misused.

God wants us to be creative in our work and diligent in our labors. God does not want us to be listless and lazy, but He wants us to be ambitious and industrious. However, to desire success and advancement at any cost is a temptation which one must not succumb to. An obsessive desire for success can cause a disregard for other people, a sacrifice of personal integrity, and the adoption of secular and materialistic standards. To make money the goal of life is a great evil. *“For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from*

God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows.” (I Timothy 6: 10; Living Bible) To be overly ambitious can lead to great evil. “When he was a boy in school Napoleon wrote an essay on the dangers of ambition. Yet his own ambition wrecked his life.” (God’s Psychiatry; p. 121)

**I was too ambitious in my deed,
And thought to distance all men in success,
Till God came on me, marked the place, and said,
“Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this line,
Attempting less than others” – and I stand,
And work among Christ’s little ones, content. (Ibid; 123)**

4. The desire for sexual fulfillment is wholesome but it can be misused.

Sex is a gift of God which was intended to be the creative expression of man within the context of the permanent human relationship of marriage.

Failure to control the powerful sexual instinct results in quick marriages and quick divorces. This failure also manifests itself in pre-marital sexual relationships which issue forth in broken hearts, minds, and bodies. Man can change love into lust, the beautiful into the ugly, and the sacred into the profane. Satan wants man to play with sex, but it is not a play thing.

There are other natural desires which can be misused. The legitimate desire for food can be misused and gluttony results. The natural desire for ease and pleasure must be guarded lest one misuse time, develop laziness, or spend money needlessly on entertainment. The inquisitive urge is normal but it too can be misused and then the horrible sin of gossiping and tale-bearing results.

We should not be ignorant of the devices of Satan. Satan seeks to ruin men by perverting natural and legitimate desires.

B. Man’s Reinforcement.

Three reinforcements against temptation are Vigilance, Avoidance, and Trust. Let us look at each of them.

- 1. Vigilance is important because of the subtle forms which temptation takes.**

“Be self-controlled and vigilant always, for your enemy the devil is always about, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey.” (I Peter 5: 8)

One must be vigilant lest Satan attack him at his weakest point. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link; no Christian is stronger than at his weakest point. Satan attack's one at his weakest point. One must guard against bitterness during times of unexplained sorrow. One must guard against skepticism if he finds it hard to accept the unique and miraculous. One must guard against intolerance if he is strong-willed and opinionated. One must guard against compromise if he is a person who is easily led. One must guard against egotism and pride if he is an unusually gifted person. If one is a very affectionate type of person, he must guard against undue intimacy in relationships. If one finds discipline hard to exercise, then he must guard against the misuse of time. One who has a vivid imagination must guard against wandering thoughts. If one is inclined to look on the dark side of life, then he must especially guard against pessimistic attitudes. If one is unusually ambitious, he must guard against the wrong desire for power. If one is a natural leader he must guard against the temptation to be domineering.

It is important to realize that Satan not only attacks one at his weakest point, but oftentimes attacks one at his strongest point. “We must always remember that again and again we are tempted through our gifts. The person who is gifted with charm will be tempted to use that charm ‘to get away with anything’. The person who is gifted with the power of words will be tempted to use his command of words to produce glib excuses to justify his own conduct. The person with a vivid and sensitive imagination will undergo agonies of temptation that a mere stolid person will never experience. The person with great gifts of mind will be tempted to use these gifts for himself and not for others, to become the master and not the servant of men. It is the grim fact of temptation that it is just where we are strongest that we must be forever on the watch.” (Barclay’s Matthew; p. 59)

Peter was known for his courage and forwardness, and yet Peter’s greatest strength failed him in the most critical hour of testing, and the result was denial of his Master. Over-confidence has been the downfall of many. There are too many on record who thought gross immorality could never be a problem to them, and yet when they were off their guard, the fell grievously into sin. The Christian must always be alert lest he be caught in the snare of the enemy. *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (I Corinthians 10: 12)*

2. Avoidance is important because of the possibility of sinful conformity.

Billy Graham gives some helpful suggestions: (A) Avoid wrong companies – “Come away from among them and stay away; touch not their evil things.” (II Corinthians 6: 17; Living Bible); (b) Avoid the second look at evil things – You can’t help the first look, but don’t take the second; (c) Discipline your conversation; (d) Be careful how you dress; (e) Choose carefully the shows and T.V. programs you watch; (f) Choose carefully what you read; (g) Be careful how you use your leisure time; (h) Never engage in heavy petting; (i) Spend a great deal of time studying and memorizing the Scriptures; (j) Have Christ in your heart.

3. Trust is important for God alone has the power to deliver one from Satan’s snares.

Why can God deliver us from the Evil One? *“Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory forever.”* The one to whom we pray is a King who is holy and all-powerful. *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* (I Corinthians 10: 13) *“I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”* (Philippians 4: 13; R.S.V.) *“Now to the One who can keep you from falling and set you in the presence of His glory, jubilant and above reproach, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, might and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all time, now, and for evermore. Amen. (Jude 24, 25) “The Lord is faithful, and He will Strengthen and Protect you from the evil one.”* (2 Thessalonians 3: 3) *“Greater is He that is in You than he (Satan) that is in the World.” “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”* (John 17: 15)

He is able to deliver thee,
Tho’ by sin oppressed
Go to him for rest;
“Our God is able to deliver thee.”

“We know (absolutely) that any one born of God does not (deliberately and knowingly) practice committing sin, but the one who was begotten of God carefully watches over and protects him – Christ’s divine presence within him preserves him against the evil – and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him or touch (him).” (I John 5: 18; Amplified Version)

“For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4: 15-16)

CONCLUSION:

The word ‘temptation’ should best be translated ‘test’. God permits us to be tested in order that our character may be refined, and in order that our loyalty to Him might be demonstrated. Temptation is not meant to make us weaker; it is meant to make us stronger.

Satan attempts to work through natural desires to cause us to fall. Vigilance, Avoidance, and Trust are all reinforcements against temptations.

“What amazing confidence did our Lord have in us! C. F. Andrews reminds us of an old legend that tells us that when Jesus returned to heaven He was asked by an angel: ‘What have you left behind to carry out the work?’ Jesus answered: ‘A little band of men and women who love me.’ ‘But what if they fail when the trial comes? Will all you have done be defeated?’ ‘Yes,’ said Jesus, ‘if they fail, all I have done will be defeated.’ ‘Is there nothing more?’ ‘No,’ said Jesus, ‘there is nothing more.’ ‘What then?’ Jesus quietly replied, ‘They will not fail.’” (God’s Psychiatry; pgs. 125, 126)

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

NOTES