

Introduction

Today, I'm preaching the second part of a two part sermon on The Disciple's Prayer, which teaches us how to pray. It gives us the basic principles we need for powerful effective prayer. Last week, I explained the address and location parts of The Disciple's Prayer and the first of the five requests that comprise it. Today, I'm going to explain the remaining four requests. I would acknowledge my use of Dallas Willard's commentary on these verses in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*.

"Your Kingdom Come"

The second request, like the first, concerns God's position in the human realm. That request, in verse 10, is **"Your kingdom come."**

God's kingdom is the range of His effective will. It's the domain or realm in which He wants done is done. The second clause in verse 10, therefore, is only restating the first clause. For God's kingdom to come means for His will to be done.

Now, notice the place to which we ask His kingdom to come. It's **"on earth as it is in heaven."** **"Heaven"** refers to the unseen spiritual realm that the angels and He inhabit. **"Earth"** refers to the places that we live our lives. Those places include our churches, homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, streets, ball fields, courts, legislative halls, movie theatres, and grocery stores to name only a few. Now, His kingdom has already come to heaven. What He wills there always happens. But that isn't the case on earth. So, we pray that it will be the case.

As a practical matter, the second request is about human activity. We're asking God to work so that people's deeds will conform to His will.

We direct this request first of all to our activity. We have limitations, weaknesses, and bodily habits that make us susceptible to acting contrary to God's will. Realizing that, we ask Him to renew our minds and revive our wills supernaturally so we're able to do what He wants. Some years ago, I recognized that I routinely used words to adjust how I appeared to

others – to make them think I was more competent and righteous than I was. That’s deceitful and hypocritical though and contrary to God’s will. So, I prayed and asked Him to assist me in being honest and sincere - in resigning to Him how I appeared to others.

We direct the second request also to the activity of others. The people we know or meet everyday are slaves to sin. They routinely do evil things automatically, without even thinking about them. So, we pray and ask God to bring the graces and powers of the Holy Spirit to their minds, hearts, and lives; to show them the evil they do and give them the desire and power not to do it. I know a Christian, for instance, who is a windbag. She dominates conversations and turns others off in the process, which is contrary to God’s will. So, I ask Him, through the Holy Spirit, to inform her mind and strengthen her will so she won’t do that.

We also direct the second request to cultural activities. Higher-level patterns of evil reside in the social structures and institutions that comprise our culture. So, we pray and ask God to break up those patterns. I pray, for instance, that He will destroy Hollywood’s obsession with sex, violence, and vulgarity or will correct the United States Supreme Court’s distortion of privacy rights, both of which are contrary to His will.

Someday, when Jesus comes again, the perfect will of God will always be done everywhere in the universe, including earth. Until that day comes, we pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

The third request is the first that concerns us and is found in verse 11, **“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

The word **“bread”** here is symbolic and represents all the things we need to live in a functional manner. Some of those are common to us all. I’m talking about things like food, clothing, and shelter. Others are peculiar to our own situations. A single mother, for instance, needs reliable babysitting for her children. An ill person needs medicine. A college student needs books. A working person needs reliable

transportation to his or her job. You get the idea. **“Bread”** symbolizes all the things we need to live in a functional manner.

Now, notice what we ask our heavenly Father. It’s that He will give us those things. It’s that He will meet the needs of our lives.

When I was in law school, my wife and I drove an old Ford Ventura with four bad tires. The steel belts were actually protruding through the rubber. We had no money to buy new ones though and so, I did what Jesus teaches. I asked God to provide them. After filling the pulpit one Sunday at Broadview Heights Friends Church, my four year-old son Moses came running up to me and said, **“Dad, dad, Jesus put new tires on our car.”** I went out and looked and sure enough, He did. One of the men at the church, who owned a gas station, noticed how bad our tires were. So, he took our car to his station during the worship service and put four new ones on it. That whole experience was the third request lived out. I had a need that was specific and real. I asked God to meet it. And He met it.

Now look at the word **“daily.”** The emphasis in this request is on provision today for what we need today. There’s nothing wrong with having provisions today for what we will need tomorrow. But we shouldn’t put our trust in that. We should put it in God instead who will be present with us tomorrow as surely as He is today. We don’t worry about the future. We ask Him for what we need today. Tomorrow, we do the same. The next day we do the same. And so on. Our only security for the future is God who gives us our bread each day as we ask Him for it.

“Forgive Us Our Debts”

The fourth request, in verse 12, is about forgiving debts. **“Debts”** refers to the things people do wrong. **“Forgiving”** means having pity on people. It connotes not dealing with them on the basis of the wrong things they’ve done – not making them pay. This request then is about people who do wrong things being forgiven. The two statements in verse 12 make clear that it has two aspects.

The first aspect is God’s forgiving us. We’ve done something wrong.

We've sinned against Him. So, we ask Him to have pity on us, which He does. He doesn't deal with us on the basis of the wrong we did. He doesn't make us pay for it. On the contrary, He treats us as if we hadn't done it. God is our heavenly Father and like good earthly fathers, He's longs to forgive His children, and does when they ask it.

The second aspect of the fourth request is we forgiving others. We say in it, "**just as we have forgiven our debtors.**"

We're doing two things here.

First, we're resolving to forgive those who've wronged us. We may, for their own good, let them suffer any natural consequences of what they've done. But otherwise, we intend to have pity on them. We intend not to deal with them on the basis of the wrongs they've done, not to make them pay. We then carry out that intention to the best of our ability.

We're doing a second thing. We're asking God to help us to forgive those who've wronged us. There's a reason we ask this. Even though it's up to us to forgive, we can't do it without God's help. But we can expect His help when we ask for it and so, that's exactly what we do. We pray as constantly as we need to and ask Him to help us forgive.

I don't know about you, but the first thing I do when someone wrongs me is pray. We've all suffered injustices at the hands of others haven't we? The greatest of those for me occurred four or five years ago now. The first thing I did when I found out what the person had done was pray. First, I resolved to forgive this one who so horribly wronged me and promised God I would. Second, I asked Him to help me do it and He did. I was able to forgive the person. I was able to have pity on her.

It's vital that we live out the fourth request, for two reasons.

The second clause in the request, "**as we also have forgiven our debtors,**" reveals one of those. You and I have a unity of spiritual orientation. We are a whole being and so, our personality needs to be internally consistent with itself. We cannot, as a result, receive forgiveness yet not give it. We're capable of receiving forgiveness (feeling forgiven) only to the degree we're capable of giving it.

Jesus' dramatic statements in verses 14-15 reveal a second reason it's vital to live out the fourth request. There are few one way streets in the kingdom of God and forgiveness isn't one of them. It's a two way street instead. God will forgive us in the same measure we forgive others. He will make us pay to the same degree we make others pay. We'll suffer eternal loss in heaven, in other words, if we don't forgive.

So, when others wrong you, pray! Resolve to forgive them and ask God's help in doing so.

"Do Not Lead Us into Temptation"

We come now to the fifth and final request in verse 13. It has two parts. One is, "**Lead us not into temptation.**" The temptation referred here is to sin. The other part is, "**Deliver us from evil.**" The evil here isn't bad things we do. It's bad things that are done to us, that is, bad things that happen to us.

Both parts of the request, together, teach us a defining truth. Bad things happening to us are temptations to sin. They're dangerous challenges to our faith. Just observe how quickly people attack God when bad things happen to them and you'll grasp what I mean. I remember actually cursing God once years ago. One of my four year-old sons was having a serious ongoing physical problem. I came home from the hospital one night, looked up into the sky, and cursed God for allowing him to go through all of that. I know it by experience and so do most of you. Bad things happening to us are temptations to sin.

So, we pray. We ask God to protect us and not let bad things happen to us. This prayer is a candid admission to Him that we can't take much pressure. Dallas Willard explains it well: "**It is a vote of 'no confidence' in our own abilities. As the series of requests begins with the glorification of God, it ends with acknowledgement of the feebleness of human beings.**" He's right and I'm not ashamed to admit it. I'm feeble and weak. So, I make this request a fundamental component of my life. I pray every day and ask God not to let bad things happen to me. I pray the

same thing for others as well.

If we pray this, God usually will protect us. Stop for a moment and consider how dangerous our world is. We travel 55 mph in steel vehicles with other steel vehicles coming at us at the same speed. Powerful bacteria and viruses fill the environment around us. We come into contact with angry, dysfunctional, and evil people every day. Our bodies are so fragile that if our eyes quit tearing, for instance, we'd go blind. Thinking of it in those terms, it's a miracle more bad things don't happen to us than do. I said "**miracle**" and mean it. The only reason a lot more bad things don't happen to us than do is because God doesn't let them. He's willing and able to protect us from them and so we ask Him to do just that.

On those rare occasions when He doesn't and something bad happens to us, He still grants our request. On the one hand, we still have His unbroken care. He gives us the provision we need, in Him, to emerge victorious. On the other hand, the bad thing He allows has a special function in His plans. Its ultimate consequence will be good for us.

A Christian whose daughter was raped and murdered experienced and expressed what I mean: "**Our ability to cope comes from God. In His presence, we derive freely all the things that really matter: grace, strength, love, and best of all His constant abiding. Christ's presence has made our sorrow something beautiful.**"

The fifth request is fundamental to life in a fallen world. So, ask it every day, "**Father, don't let bad things happen to me.**"

Conclusion

The requests climax in verse 13. It contains a declaration, "**For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**" That states the reality that is the very basis of the requests – the utter greatness and goodness of God. Verse 13 also contains a word, "**Amen,**" which means, "**So be it.**" It affirms that those requests are precisely what we want. The declaration and word close out in dramatic fashion the prayer whose principles we should follow – The Disciple's Prayer.