



TEACH
US TO
PRAY

The Exposition
& the Application of
THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER
[Luke 11:1-4]

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An Exposition & Application of 'The Disciples' Prayer' in Luke 11

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V.1 it happened while Jesus was praying in a certain place.

The gospel of Luke particularly emphasizes the ongoing life and incessant ejaculations of prayer to His Father. Not only did our Lord pray brief, ejaculatory, in-the-moment prayers (Luke 10:21-22) but He also devoted long portions of time for intimate communion with His Father (Luke 5:16; 6:12). In this particular setting near the end of His earthly ministry, just months before the cross, while traveling through the regions of Judea in and around the Jerusalem area, our Lord spent time praying.

In fact, in Luke 11, we read that he was praying in a certain place. And not only was he praying but his disciples were near him. An interesting note to consider is the importance he placed on intimate, private communion with the Father *even* while others accompanied him. He found it to be more profitable to spend time with the Father at the expense of conversing with men. Of course He would communicate with His disciples and with the swelling crowds, but he particularly prioritized private, frequent, lengthy, and glad communion with His God and Father.

V.1b After he had finished.

This signifies that Christ had a particular time devoted to, or set aside for, prayer. He had devoted himself to a season of prayer -- even while the disciples stood nearby.

V.1c One of His disciples said to Him: "Lord teach us to pray..."

Something about observing the prayer life of Christ so affected the disciples that one bold man approached Christ and humbly asked the Savior to teach His own *how* to pray. We can relate to this. There are those particular individuals, that is, those who are especially frequent with God in closet-prayer who affect us because we hear them pray. And as they pray it becomes evident that they know their Bible, they know their God, they know what it is to have intimate communion with God and joyous fellowship with Him. These are those who pray seriously and with sobriety. They pray with fervency and with a contagious earnestness. They pray with a humility as approaching the judgment bar of infinitely holy Sovereign, and yet at the same time, with a holy boldness as running into the lap of a tender, compassionate, endearing Father ready to receive his own children.

When observing the Lord pray, the disciples were affected. They had seen Christ preach, cast out demons, travel, evangelize, pass through crowds, deliver His own life from angry mobs, and respond to violent persecutors, but here, at this point in time, they observed Christ pray and this affected them. So they approached Christ to teach them how to pray.

It should instruct us that nowhere in the gospels do we find the disciples pleading with Jesus to teach them how to preach, how to exorcize demons, how to evangelize, how to lead or manage a group, how to grow the following of believers, or the like. Rather, they are so overwhelmed and

affected by the serious and intimate communion Jesus has with the Father that they cannot refrain from asking Him to instruct them *how* to pray.

V.2 When you pray, say:

This response from Jesus signifies such compassion and grace. He did not respond with a harsh, sarcastic criticism about how they should *already* know how to pray. In fact, He has already taught them a near identical model to this prayer earlier in the 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 6) when they were in Galilee swarmed by massive crowds. But here, our Lord so tenderly responds to the inquiry of the disciples to help them in their prayer life.

This response teaches us a few helpful elements:

1. The ASSUMPTION that they will pray. *When*. Christ says: *when* you pray. He does not say "if" you pray but rather "when" you pray. That is, he assumes that they will pray, meet with the Lord, commit themselves to fervent, regular, frequent fellowship with the Triune God in prayer.
2. The INDIVIDUALITY of prayer. *You*. This responds to the disciple who asked the question and wanted to learn how to pray. This information that Christ will give helps every single Christian how to pray. Prayer is an intimate fellowship between the soul of a believer and His God. Closet-prayer should regularly be a part of our daily lives.
3. The CORPORATE nature of prayer. *You*. The verbal form that our Lord uses is in the plural. *When you (all) pray*. Thus, not only is prayer a very individual act but it also must be *corporate* as well. That is, believers must gather together to pray. In fact, even the very model that our Lord will set before the disciples proves this: "Give *us* each day *our* daily bread. Forgive *us our* sins, etc." Thus, Christ assumes that the people of God will regularly meet together and that this template that He will offer will guide them into profitable times of corporate and powerful prayer together.
4. The WORSHIP in prayer. *Pray*. The word for *pray* that our Lord uses is, perhaps, one of the most broad words for prayer. It is a generic word that signifies an act of worship. It is a worshipful, earnest, and humble coming before the Lord in heartfelt communication. Prayer is the lifeblood of the believer's soul.
5. The PATTERN of prayer. *Say...* This instruction from our Lord is not intended to be a stand-alone, repeated 'verbatim' prayer that is only and always repeated exactly by God's people. The reason why we know this is numerous. First, there is no other occasion in all of the New Testament where believers pray this prayer exactly, or are even commanded to pray this exactly. Second, the accounts of the early church (Book of Acts) do not provide an example of them praying through this prayer exactly. Third, this teaching of the prayer (Luke 11) differs slightly from the similar 'Disciples' prayer' in Matthew 6 (in the Sermon on the Mount). Though they are very close to each other in content and form there are a number of slight differences. Furthermore, this is a very simple, brief prayer. It only takes a few seconds to utter it fully. For this reason, we may assume that this is *not* given to be a verbatim prayer that all Christians must always, publicly, corporately, repeat together in worship services (though this certainly can occur!) but rather this functions as an outline, a template, a skeleton, a model, a guide as to what the necessary -- essential -- elements of prayer should include when we do meet with God.

The pattern and layout of this prayer also instructs us greatly. Note that Christ does not immediately counsel His followers to begin beseeching God for all their requests and supplications. God is not a heavenly genie who serves as our slave to give us all of our wants. Rather, our Lord sets before His followers a wonderfully divine pattern for prayer. It begins with God-centered and God-focused prayers and then, and only then, does it transition to presenting requests and supplications to God for self and provisions. That is to say, worship comes before presenting our wants to God. Exalting God should precede entreating God. Praising God should go before presenting our petitions to God. It should begin with God-centered, vertical-oriented, worship *before* focusing on self, horizontal-oriented supplications. In this particular model in Luke 11:2-4 Christ sets before His people 5 petitions -- 5 commands or imperatives.

GOD-CENTERED

1. Hallowed be *Your Name*.
2. *Your Kingdom* come.

PRESENTING OUR SUPPLICATIONS

1. Give *us* each day our daily bread.
2. Forgive *us* our sins.
3. Lead *us* not into temptation.

V.2 “Father”

Our blessed Lord counsels His followers to begin their praying with God as “Father”. This is unspeakably important and profound. By this, our Lord conveys a number of helpful elements. First, God only hears the prayers of the redeemed. That is to say, He only hears and answers the prayers of those who can call Him “Father.” He does not listen to the wicked and their supplications. Again, no unbeliever’s prayer is ever heard and answered by Almighty God. Second, our Lord teaches that we can only pray to God and approach God through Christ as our only mediator. It is Christ who is our mediator and who brings us to God so that we can see Him and view Him and adore Him and approach Him as Father. Third, when our Lord tells us to pray “Father” he implies that our prayers must begin with the humble recognition that God is our authority, our sovereign, our Wisdom, our Head. That is to say, like a Father has authority over His children so our great God has all authority over us as His children. Fourth, the title “Father” connotes an intimacy that all believers enjoy just as a child enjoys intimacy with his father. Fifth, the title “Father” signifies availability and accessibility. God is always and ever available to His children. His ear always attends to their cry. There never is an occasion or a moment when God’s children honestly, humbly, and purely call upon Him and He turns their cries away or turns a deaf ear to their supplication. Never does a father do this to his cherished and beloved children and in the same way, never does God do this! Sixth, the title “Father” envelops the fullness of familial and sacrificial love. Only those who have been bought with the blood of Christ can call God Father and approach God as a merciful Father, a tender Father, a compassionate Father, an available Father. God gives the right to those who believe upon Christ to become children of God (John 1:12). As John exclaims: “What sort of love is this that the Father has given that we should be called children of God, and such we are” (1 John 3:1). To call God Father brings all of these

elements together. Finally, the love of God is revealed perfectly and preeminently in and through the work of Christ at Calvary. It is God who demonstrated unexplainable love by sending His only-begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). That the Father would lay all of our iniquity upon the Son and crush Him for our sin is the ultimate display of love (cf. Isa 53). To call God "Father", as Christ exhorts us to do, means that we must pray with a conscious understanding that we as sinners can *only* approach Holy God through Christ who was slain for our sins and transgressions (Rom 5:8, 10; 2 Cor 5:21).

And not only can the believer approach God but the Christian approaches God with a holy boldness and an affectionate love since God is Abba Father through Christ and His cross (Gal 4:6-7). What a blessed thought that believers are adopted into God's family as sons (Eph 1:5) and that we are children of God (1 John 3:1) and that cry out "Abba! Father" with the Spirit who testifies and assures our own spirits that we are children of God (Rom 8:15-17). Endless galaxies of praise should flow from our mouths & fill our hearts because of these eternal realities!

Note, this is just the prologue to prayer. No requests have been presented yet! We have not entreated God yet. All the believer has done at this point is merely worship God for who He is, remember who we are as sinners engulfed in Christ and in His righteousness and received by God by virtue of Christ's merit. Indeed, we have exalted God, remembered God, praised God, adored God, magnified Christ and His priestly and redemptive work, and extolled His sovereignty and love. What a way to begin prayer! O may God warm our hearts as we commune with Him and warm our hearts with this blessed reality that Almighty God is our "Abba, Father" and not our angry, slaughtering Judge. All because of Christ and by His merit and righteousness, we are saved from divine wrath and can come with holy boldness into the lap of our Father whose heart is full of ever-flowing rivers of love and affections of compassion toward His children. This is the pattern of our Lord that He gives to His followers.

V.2 Hallowed be your Name.

When the believer recognizes the humble position that he enjoys before God as "Abba Father" and enjoys sweet communion with the Beloved Father, Christ beckons His disciples to present the first petition which is wholly doxological and entirely theocentric. The petition is for God's Name to be hallowed. The simple meaning is for God's character (=Name; all that He is that is descriptive of His Name) to be set-apart, sanctified, holy; thus, hallowed. This first petition in the prayer brings the believer into a right frame of recognizing the uniqueness of God's Name and the holy (set apart) perfections that defines His nature. To pray for God's Name to be hallowed is an exclamation from believers asking God that He would reveal His self, His name, His character, His attributes, His perfections, His beauties to His people. This petition places God as the unique, perfect, supreme and sovereign Creator who is Himself holy and mighty and divine. And this wholly eliminates all other rivals. In a sense, it beckons us to reflect back to Isaiah when the Lord says: "To whom will you liken me that I would be His equal? Says the Holy One (Isa 40:25). And then later, "I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He" (Isa 41:4). Yet again, "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness... I am the LORD, that is my Name; I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven images. Behold the former things

have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you” (Isa 42:6, 8-9). Still further, God exclaims: “I am He. Before me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no Savior besides me” (Isa 43:10-11). Even later, still again, God heralds: “And there is no other God besides me, a righteous GOD and as Savior; there is none except me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (Isa 45:21-22). All of these verses -- and hosts of others -- exclaim that God *alone* is the LORD and that He *alone* is God; there is none other. All of this shows that God is *holy*; that is, distinct, separate, set apart, different, distinguished from His creation.

So when our Lord calls us to pray: “Hallowed be your Name,” He beckons us to pray with a right understanding that it is *God* who is Holy. God’s Name refers to all of His attributes. Thus, His glories and beauties are wholly wonderful, entirely wondrous, and sublimely ravishing. O that we would heed our Savior’s counsel in praying to hallow God’s Name in our hearts and minds. This charges us to think rightly about God and His attributes.

On the other hand, this warns us against having little and low views of God. This challenges us to make sure that our understanding of God is derived from Scripture rather than from our rationale, our assumptions, our inherent thoughts of God that are inaccurate and unbiblical. Thus, Christ beckons us to remember who God is — God’s Name — and to hallow His Name in our minds, our hearts, our lips, and with our lives.

The Scriptures of old declare that God’s Holy Name has been profaned because of the sin of Israel and God exiled them to Babylon (Ezekiel 36:19). Yet God promised that He would have concern for His holy name and that He would again act -- not for their sakes but for the sake of *His Holy Name* -- and how He would vindicate His holiness of His great name which they had profaned so that the nations will know that He is the LORD (Ezek 36:22-23). Indeed, in the Lord’s instructions there is even an eschatological (future, end-times) hope that God will again act for His Name’s sake and for His glory to make His name great among the nations (Mal 1:11; Ps 98:2). O how believers can hold God to His promises and hold God to His own word!

If our prayers include this kind of affirmation and acknowledgement of who God is and how God has revealed Himself, a few things must happen. First, it will drive us to Scripture so that we will pray with God’s Word open and before us so that we will understand who God is as He reveals Himself in Holy Scripture and we worship Him for His character, His being, His nature, and His perfections. Second, it will compel us to heartfelt worship. It is impossible to be so caught up with God’s character and refuse to worship Him for who He is. Third, it stirs us up to fervent piety. Right thinking about God stimulates right living before God. Fourth, it guards our mouths from speaking frivolous things each day and fills our hearts and minds (and mouths!) with lofty thoughts of God so that we speak of His greatness and fame in our daily conversations with family, friends, and various acquaintances. Fifth, it prepares the believing soul for worship in heaven (Rev 15:4). Heavenly worship extols God who alone is holy and as the heart of the believer is full of the glories of God’s perfections he finds himself being well prepared for

everlasting glory as God is extolled by His people there in the sublime and ineffable praise of the Lamb!

All of this is the directed way to begin our prayers. This can be lengthy prayers as individuals call upon God in the inner closet in private prayer each morning or evening. This can also incorporate public prayer as the people of God meet together and pray through God's being, attributes, and character. It also can be instructive as parents model for children how to pray by first affirming who God is and extolling His wondrous perfections (His Name) as being absolutely exclusive and totally supreme. Let us follow our Savior's instructions by filling our minds with biblical truth so that our prayers are biblically informed, theo-centric, ineffably sublime, and unspeakably ravishing as we commune with God in both private and public prayer.

V.2 Your kingdom come.

In this template, or model, for prayer, our Savior instructs us with a second petition: "let Your kingdom come!" This is the Christian's cry for God's eternal and sovereign rule to be made manifest across the entire earth. This is the believer's heartfelt and earnest plea to God that He would return quickly and establish peace on earth.

When Christ instructs His followers to pray in this way, it echoes Zechariah 14:9: "the LORD will become king over all the earth." Thus, the believer is to look to the future and anticipate the certain coming of the kingdom of God. Again, it is to long for the day when Christ returns and everything is under his feet (1 Cor 15:24-26). This request expresses the longing for the evil one, that great Deceiver, Satan himself, to be destroyed and for sin to be vanquished! Indeed, this plea expresses the desire for death to be eradicated once for all! O let Christ and His kingship finally and fully come!

Speaking of the kingdom of God and the sovereignty of God, two essential elements of His reign should be marked out. First, God is the majestic, eternal, absolute, unchanging, heavenly King who sovereignly rules over every atom and person, over every animal and raindrop, and over every tsunami and ocean wave, and over every star and every grain of sand. Of course our God has all power, all authority, all dominion, and all power! He rules as the King! The Lord reigns (Ps 93:1)! But there is another element to this sovereignty of God that we must understand. Second, God also is the mediatorial King who rules over His people just as He did in the Old Testament over His people Israel. God was the King over His people and He ruled over them through mediators (e.g., Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, etc.). Even when the earthly Monarchy was established in Israel, God ruled over His people through human kings who sat on kingly thrones from Jerusalem (e.g., David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, etc.). In the days of tragic rebellion and horrendous, national, widespread sin and iniquity, the Hebrew prophets fervently and frequently prophesied that God would judge His people by means of exile out of their land and into a foreign land (Babylon), and then after 70 years God would restore them to their land again. And then, the prophets speak of future times of restoration back in the Promised Land where the LORD Himself would rule as King over His people from Zion. In fact, not only would the LORD rule as King from Zion over His people, Israel, but the nations would flock to

Zion to worship the Lord of hosts. So detailed are these accounts that the prophet Zechariah speaks of the nations grabbing a garment of a Jew and pleading to go to Jerusalem with the Jew to worship their God (Zech 8:23). This earthly kingdom of peace where the LORD Himself reigns from Zion not only over Israel but over the nations has yet to happen just as the prophets of old had promised. The Lord spoke through them, in plain language, and these prophecies have yet to be fulfilled entirely and globally and marvelously (cf. Psalm 2, 72, 110). Thus, when the Christian prays: "Let your kingdom come" there is a sense in which the believer looks forward to the eschaton with great anticipation and with certain expectancy and with diligent watchfulness longing for the Lord Himself to return to be King over the earth (Matt 25:31-34).

It must also be noted that in this plea, Christ incorporates the believer's recognition of two aspects. First, true believers bewail the present and current state of godlessness and evil that surrounds us on all sides. And second, true believers humbly surrender their allegiance wholly and entirely and without reservation to Jesus Christ as sovereign King. That is to say, the kingship of Jesus Christ must affect the entirety of one's life. God is just simply sovereign out 'there' somewhere with no relation to me and my life and daily conduct. But rather, God does in fact sit on heaven's throne as the Sovereign and this has absolutely everything to do with how I think, how I act, how I speak, how I converse, and how I live. Thus, pleading for Christ's kingdom to come negatively confesses the godless and perverse culture in which we live but yet it also positively affirms the heartfelt passion to daily surrender, willfully bow, and heartily adore this glorious King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord so wonderfully and clearly explicates how His people should pray. And in these first two petitions, He instructs us to pray *Godward* and *God-centered* prayers and petitions. These focus on the glory of God, the fame of God, the character of God, the reign of God, the plan and program of God! O that we as His people would establish our hearts with this God-centered form of praying and with this God-saturated method of prayer. Consider how our days would be spent if we nourished our souls on the incessant oceans of delight in the person and pleasures of God and in the eternal, fixed, and sure plan and program of God. O how this would inflame our hearts with love for the Savior! It would stir up our affections to worship God for His wisdom and power. Indeed, we would fall before His omnipresence and omniscience. O let God burn in our souls an unconquerable and insatiable burden for lost souls headed for the violent torments of fire so that we would proclaim to them this glorious God and His glorious plan of salvation! O time is short! Our days are numbered! Let not God's people waste even an hour. But let us redeem all the blessed time God has graciously given to us to worship Him and proclaim Him! Let us make much of our God and impress upon the hearts and souls of the lost to be reconciled to God while there still is time! We must cry and shout with the prophets of old: "Prepare to meet your God!"

It is at this point in this model for prayer that our Lord gives that a great shift occurs. The transition now unfolds. Christ instructed us to pray *Godward* prayers first and foremost. These focus on God's Person (Hallowed be Your Name) and on God's Program (Let Your kingdom come). Now, and only now, are believers in the proper state of mind with hearts fixed and

focused on God to present our own petitions to God. Thus, adoration comes first and then asking follows. Exalting God is foremost and then entreating God follows thereafter. Praising God leads before petitioning God with our requests.

V.3 Give us each day our daily bread.

This is the third petition in this prayer in Luke that our Lord gives to His disciples to teach them how to pray. And in this third petition, it is the first in the category of presenting our own wants and needs and requests before the throne of grace (Heb 4:16). In this third petition, our Lord instructs us to pray: "Give us each day our daily bread" (v.3). This is reminiscent of Proverbs 10:3: "the Lord will not allow the righteous to hunger." And how true that is. If, after all, God's children come to Him as "Father" and have such intimacy with God as a beloved Father and have such boldness with God as "Abba Father", is it not only wise and prudent to ask and trust God to provide for all His blood bought children our daily necessities? This third petition in the Disciples' prayer asks for God's provision. It focuses on our needs and God's abundant supply and generous provision and sovereign timing in meeting all of those needs that we have. First, God knows our needs. Second, God is able to meet all our needs. Third, what we perceive to be necessities in life may not in fact be real needs that our Father, in His wisdom and love, sees as genuine needs. Fourth, God promises to provide for His people on His timetable and not on ours. Fifth, God delights when His children earnestly and fervently plead with Him and plead His promises in Scripture through prayer. Sixth, God may not provide exactly what we ask for in exactly the amount or way or form in which we may ask Him but His provision is always best and for His glory and for our good. Seventh, this petition drives the believer to fervent, daily, ongoing, incessant trust in God. The believer must trust God. He cannot *not* trust His Father.

After all, Philippians 4:19 promises that God will supply all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Psalm 145:15 declares that God gives food to all His creatures in due time. Thus, it is God who provides. He has the abundant supply. He knows when to give, supply, and the amount in which to dispense, and the manner in which to give His provisions to His children. He is wise, loving, gracious, compassionate, merciful, all-knowing, and absolutely powerful. Indeed, God providentially works so that He orchestrates amazingly manifold and complex ways of distributing His blessings to His people. It's like a spider's web where God so gloriously, wisely, craftily, and divinely orchestrates situations and relationships and occasions to provide for His people -- all by His grand design, all under His absolute sovereignty, and all for His people's enjoyment and provision.

When Christ instructs us to pray that God would give us each day our daily bread it is to be the believer's understanding and conviction that survival depends on God's gracious provision. As has been said by commentators of old: We live under God's care one day at a time. Consider Israel of old. When Israel had departed Egypt and had crossed through the Red Sea on dry ground and then they came to the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai (Ex 16:1) the whole congregation grumbled against Moses and Aaron because of their lack of food (Ex 16:2-3). With amazing promises of provision, the Lord said to Moses: "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather *a day's portion every day*, that I may test them,

whether or not they will walk in my instruction” (Ex 16:4, emphasis added). O what a gracious God that He would cause bread to rain out of heaven for His beloved people! And still, what a gracious God that He promised to give them *only a day's portion every day*. Note that He did not deem it best to provide for them a year's supply, or a month's supply, or a week's supply, and certainly not the 40-year supply all at one time! See the faithful, trustworthy, dependable, promised provision of God. And yet His people *had* to trust in Him! They had no other option.

JR Miller aptly said:

“There is a deep lesson in this teaching. Life is not given to us by the year or the month—but by single days. Night is the horizon which bounds our vision; we see not the morrow, and we are to confine our thought and concern, to the little space between the rising and the setting of the sun. This does not forbid forethought—the Bible encourages wise and proper care for the future. But all we are authorized to ask God—to give us what is enough for the present day. Even if in the evening our last crust is eaten and there is nothing in store for tomorrow, we need not be afraid, nor think that God has forgotten us. When the morrow comes, we may ask for the morrow's own bread—and know that God will hear us and answer our prayer in the right way.”

Our Lord elsewhere promised that the divine cure for all anxiety is trust. Yes, it is trusting God and refusing to worry. Our Lord so clearly stated: “Do not be worried about your life, as to what you will *eat or what you will drink*” (Matt 6:25, emphasis added). Those who worry about God's provision of their necessities are rebuked by our Savior in a spirit of tender and faithful love as He says: “O you of little faith” (Matt 6:31). Again, our Lord states: “Do not worry” (Matt 6:31, 34). In these verses, earlier in our Lord's ministry while in Galilee preaching to the multitudes (Matt 5-7), Christ promised His own people that God would provide for them just as He provides for the birds and for the flowers. If God so provides for them will He not provide for His beloved children who are bought with the blood of His own dear Son?

This all teaches us so many helpful and instructive lessons. We as God's people must be free from the torment of tomorrow's worries by daily trusting in God's provision. Yes our God is wise. Our God is bounteous. Our God is good. Our God loves His people with a ravishing and pursuing love. A few practical comments must be impressed upon our souls from this petition. First, we must pray for God to provide. Yes, we must not arrogantly expect that God must give us food or that we deserve to be fed. Rather, let us earnestly pray and fervently seek God for His provision. And when He does fulfill His faithful Word, let us thank Him with much gratitude for His faithfulness and Fatherly provision. Second, we must trust God for our daily portion. Believers should be on guard against hoarding up many possessions that can easily take our hearts off of the beauty of Christ and place them on the sparkling and temporary gadgets of this world. Trust God for the daily ration. We must not think or expect (or pursue!) the gathering of so many supplies that we *do not need* to trust God for His provision. O there is wisdom in planning ahead and preparing for hard times to come (e.g., Prov 6) but this must not happen to the neglect of daily, fervent, real, heartfelt confidence in God that He will provide for our needs. Third, believers must remember that it is *God* who is the giver of all good gifts. James 1:17 reminds us that “every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of

lights.” Even if God provides in a way that was unexpected or if God provides by means of a person or circumstance that is unforeseen, let us fervently praise Him and worshipfully submit to His gracious provision and love. Fourth, believers must realize that God will supply our *real needs*; our bare necessities. God never promises to lavish His people with manifold and royal earthly wealth and blessings. Jesus said: “Give us each day our daily *bread*.” He does not say: “Give us this day our daily *meat*.” Bread is a simple staple of life. Bread was a simple, bare necessity of life. It was the food that God provided for His people in the barren and dry wilderness. And in the same way, this same God promises to provide what is *really needed* for His people in each day’s supply. Fifth, believers should engage in the habit of beginning the day by asking for God’s provision and trusting that He will provide it in His time and in His way and in His measure and believers should continue throughout the day asking and thanking and worshiping God for His provision and supply of food and, finally, believers should conclude each day with prayer thanking God for His faithfulness to His Word in providing that day’s supply -- however much, however mean, however manifold, however plenteous, however tasteful, and however He supplied it. Let us be thankful for His provision!

God’s provision is good, wise, and perfect. In our Lord’s instruction, in love He guards us from the storing up of many goods that can allure our hearts away from God and onto earthly treasures. But with a constant confident in God’s daily supply, we do not hoard goods because we trust in our God for His provision. And we know that our God will provide. A simple prayer is that given in Proverbs 30:7-9: “Two things I have asked ... Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, That I not be full and deny You and say, “Who is the LORD?” Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God.” Let us pray like the wise sage of old that God would guard us from both poverty and riches.

Heed these well-put words by Puritan, Thomas Watson:

“Some are not content with "daily bread," but desire to have their barns filled, and heap up silver as dust; which proves a snare to them. "Those who will be rich fall into a snare." 1 Tim 6:9. Pride, idleness, and lust— are three worms which often breed in prosperity. Prosperity often deafens the ear against God. "I spoke unto you in your prosperity, but you said—I will not hear." Jer 22:21. Soft pleasures harden the heart. In the body, the more fat—the less vitality. Just so, the more outward plenty—often the less piety.”

O what a kind God and a generous Father! What a wise God and a compassionate Abba, Father. He gives what is needed and He gives from His supply. He gives to His children and He wants us as His children to depend upon Him, to ask Him for His supply and to thank Him when and how He provides. Let us marvel at our God and His unfathomable providence and incomprehensible wisdom.

V.4a And forgive us our sins

Our Lord next provides another petition in this model prayer. The next supplication, it is the fourth in the Lukan version of the disciples prayer, gives a new tone to the prayer. This introduces confession as a necessary and important element in prayer. Our Lord instructs His

people to approach God with reverence, awe, praise, adoration, trust, dependence, and now with heartfelt contrition over sin and persistent repentance over transgressions that we have committed. This petition reminds us of 1 John 1:9 that if believers confess their sins, God is faithful and righteous, and He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The petition in v.4a is very simple, straightforward, unambiguous, and to the point. A handful of elements come to light in this concise prayer of confession. We need to examine each carefully and in turn. First, the plea for forgiveness. Note how our Lord instructs us to ask Him, to entreat Him, to beg Him to forgive and pardon us for all our sins. Nehemiah prayed: "God is a God of forgiveness" (Neh 9:17). The psalmist understood that there is forgiveness with God (Ps 130:4). Jesus shed His blood at Calvary and died for His people for the forgiveness of their sins (Matt 26:28). Indeed, Christ's coming brought the knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77). Believers have forgiveness of sins in Christ (Col 1:14). The overwhelming testimony of Scripture must comfort the souls of Christians that there is a full and free forgiveness available in Christ! The word for 'forgiveness' that Jesus uses here is a theme in Luke as it connotes a releasing from a bondage. Of course, those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are justified at the very moment of salvation (Rom 5:1-2) and are never ever in a state of condemnation ever again since they are united to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). So positionally, soteriologically, believers stand in the right with God and fully forgiven forevermore because of the work of Christ (2 Cor 5:21). But, at the same time, believers still continue to battle with the flesh and with sin and since we do stumble into sin we need daily cleansing and daily forgiveness because of our sins (1 John 1:8-10, esp v. 9). Jesus illustrates this clearly when he spoke to Peter by saying that those who have bathed (salvation) need only to wash his feet, but is completely clean (John 13:10). Those who have been fully bathed already in Christ and are positionally saved (Rom 3:24-25) don't need to be regenerated or re-saved again. But believers do need to be continually confessing our sins (cf. Dan 9) to our Father who is gracious to forgive us all our sins (Luke 11:4).

Second, this shows the earnest desire and expectation that God will personally and fully forgive *us*. A comforting note of promise and pardon occurs in these verses. The believer can pray to his Father: "Forgive *us* our sins." There is something comforting about knowing that God does not throw a blanket of forgiveness generally down from heaven upon mankind but rather, he specifically, deliberately, and lavishly forgives His own who are in Christ. Third, note how the contrite sinner fully owns his sin. He says: forgive us *our* sins. It's not just their sins or the sins of the vile culture or the despicable crimes of the pagans out there. Rather, it is *our* sins. This is imperative for a biblical understanding of repentance and confession. True confession of sin and genuine repentance is not mere lip service or a mere acknowledging one's shortcomings. True repentance is the hating of sin and the forsaking of it (Prov 28:13). It is the mortifying of the flesh (Rom 8:13). It is the believer acknowledging with humility and with honesty that he has failed. It is a full unveiling and uncovering of his faults -- both public and private. The man who truly is repentant is not one who refuses to call his sin *sin*. He faithfully, fervently affirms his sin to God and ferociously makes war with his sin so as to pluck it up from the root so that it does not return again. This is the person who says: forgive us for *our* sins. Yes, I have sinned. I have

committed iniquity. It is the man who specifically unveils his sins to God that receives the sweet assurance of forgiveness from his heavenly Father. Those who pridefully cover their sin, refuse to make it known to God, or seek to even hide the sin from God have yet to truly repent of the sin and confess it and forsake it. Until a sin is intended to be hacked to pieces and mortified and steps are taken to uproot that monster and replace it with godly habits, a man has not truly repented to the fullest. The man of God who seeks God's forgiveness humbly affirms his own sin and does not seek to cover it up.

And fourth, the Christian understands the heinous crime and vile abomination that every sin really is. Earlier in Christ's ministry, he taught his followers to pray similarly: "forgive us our *debts*" (Matt 6:12). Here in Luke 11:4 Christ instructs us to pray: "forgive us our sins". The word for sin here speaks of missing the mark. The mark is the perfect standard that God has set forth by His glory, by His sovereignty, by His Law, and by His righteous standard. But we fall short of that standard. We have sinned against God. We have not hit the bullseye of glorifying God, honoring God, obeying His Law, and loving Him as we ought. We have sinned -- we have missed the mark. Whether one misses the bullseye by an inch or by a mile makes no difference. The bullseye was missed and the man has erred. And Christ by His grace and wisdom counsels His people to acknowledge our sin, seek God's gracious forgiveness and pardon for all of our sins -- misdeeds. Sin is not being or doing what God requires. Or, it is doing what God forbids. It is lack of conformity to God's Law and perfect standard. All are guilty. And yet, as children of God, who approach God as Abba Father, He is not an angry, ferocious, wrath-filled, crushing slaughterer toward His children. Rather, just as a father would happily and lavishly pour out forgiveness upon a child who asked his daddy to forgive him for a misdeed, how much more will our heavenly Father who is full of infinite perfections and incessant oceans of love for His blood-bought children forgive us. So great is this concept that God has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12) and has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19).

O let believers quiet themselves frequently before a most merciful Father to plead for his daily forgiveness. This does not, nor shall it ever, alter one's salvation-position before Him. Those who are in Christ cannot ever become unsaved (Phil 1:6). Our God saves and saves completely to the uttermost (John 13:1; Rom 8:28-30). But even though our position cannot change, true believers in love with their God want to please Him with their conduct each day (2 Cor 5:9). Let us come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16) for we have a great High Priest (Heb 8:1) who gloriously and everlastingly intercedes for us (Heb 7:25). His blood saves for all time (Heb 10:12) and our gracious God is a most merciful Father (1 Pet 1:17) who invites us to draw near to Him with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith (Heb 10:22). O believer, rise early and run to Christ! Plead for his mercy upon you for the day! Throughout your days, run to the Rock of Ages and comfort your soul in His atoning blood and everlasting love for those whom He has redeemed (Eph 1:7). At the conclusion of each day when you lay your head on the pillow, reflect on your day and confess your sin and seek His mercy (Ps 51; Ps 130). O Christian, never let your sin drive you away from the Savior but let your sin drive you *to* the cross, to an inviting Savior, to a willing Savior, to a wondrous Savior, to a loving Savior! O how God's affections and

compassions are kindled with blazing love for His beloved sons. Child of God, call on God regularly and frequently and honestly for forgiveness. And you will find a most merciful Father who not only is willing but eager to wash them all away by virtue of Christ's work. Let no lingering sin remain in your heart for this will suck away and snuff out joy in your service to Christ! Run to His bosom and hide under His wings with earnest cries for His forgiveness!

V.4b For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Now, the reason that the Lord encourages us to pray for this is because we are and must be, in our hearts, fully willing to forgive all those who have wronged us. The Lord's instruction is to plead for God's forgiveness and we as the people of God must be willing to dispense lavish forgiveness upon anyone for any offense that they may have committed against us. In understanding this phrase, two necessary items must be discussed.

First, what this does NOT mean. In providing this template for prayer, our Lord does not counsel us to ask God to forgive us *based on the fact that* we forgive others; or, by virtue of the meritorious deed that we dispense forgiveness to others. In other words, our Savior's instruction does not mean that granting forgiveness to others somehow *merits* or *earns* forgiveness from God! Of course, the Word of God overwhelmingly declares that salvation is a gift (Eph 2:8-9) and a free one at that -- all by God's grace (Rom 6:23). The gift of God in saving sinners is freely given to sinners by grace (Rom 3:24) and it is not a result of any works of the Law (2 Tim 1:9; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 2:16). But here our Lord is exhorting believers to pray and ask for God's forgiveness with a true spirit of love and joy and humility as we really understand just now desperate and needy we are for His gracious and free pardon. Those who *do* in fact understand their need for God's forgiveness and His wondrous pardon which He grants to His own in Christ are those who *demonstrate this* with the willing and eager attitude to lavish forgiveness upon others.

Second, what this DOES mean. This does mean that we cannot expect to receive from God what we are unwilling to give to others. Those who are unwilling to forgive others prove that they themselves do not understand the weight of their sin, the wonder and fullness of God's forgiveness and they prove that they have not in fact been forgiven by God. Those who do not forgive others prove that they themselves are unforgiven by God. An unforgiving Christian is a contradiction in terms. No person who has been forgiven an infinite debt by God should ever withhold forgiveness from those who have committed small offenses against them by comparison. If God has forgiven us an eternal debt that we could never repay, how much more should we happily forgive others small debts they may have incurred against us.

But what is this forgiveness that we seek from God? It is the covering of our sin. It is the pardoning of our sin. It is the releasing of our sin. It is the delivering us from the bondage of sin, from the penalty of sin, from the eternal consequence of sin, and the bringing us back into intimate fellowship with God. Forgiveness is defined most simply as a promise of pardon. The one who forgives promises to pardon the offender. He promises to *not hold* the sin against the offender ever again — ever! He intentionally chooses to not hold a grudge, to never become

bitter, to slaughter any root of bitterness that may rise up. Christians must be the most forgiving people on the planet. If a person professes to be a Christian and yet refuses to forgive anyone of any offense -- no matter how small or great it may be -- he presents a monster of a God and a false representation of the gospel. Our God forgives *all* our sins! Let us learn from our great God and forgive others any and all offenses they may commit against us.

But how must we forgive? Believers must forgive

1. Lavishly — God in His great love forgives with a lavish, overwhelming, full, and free pardon. He does not withhold anything from those that He forgives. Our God is full of bankless oceans and endless rivers of forgiveness towards His people.

2. Unconditionally — When God forgives His people by virtue of Christ and His righteousness, God never attaches conditions to His forgiveness of us. He does not provide conditions that He will forgive *only if* we perform up to a certain standard or par. He forgives unconditionally and wondrously!

3. Unhesitatingly — When a child comes to God and pleads for mercy, our great God forgives without hesitation. His compassions are hotly kindled and His mercies are generously poured out upon His children. Like a father in love with his children, God does not hesitate to give forgiveness to a penitent child. Of course, He fully and happily pardons sin without hesitation. Who could stand before God if He were to mark iniquities? But with our God there is forgiveness (Ps 130)!

4. Heartily — Jesus once told a story of a slave who owed his master an incalculable, infinite debt that he could never hope to repay. And yet when he fell down prostrate and pleaded for mercy, the master graciously forgave him the debt. Then he left that place and no sooner did he find one of his own servants who owed him but a few small coins. And, in anger, that man who was just released from the infinite debt began to strangle his own very servant who owed him a few cents and demanded that he pay back the entire debt. At this moment, the onlookers went to the master who had forgiven the ultimate debt and recounted the situation to them. He was moved with anger and handed his servant over to the torturers until he might repay all that was owed him (cf. Matt 18:23-34). Indeed, Jesus concludes the story by affirming that God will do the same to those who do not forgive their brother *from the heart* (Matt 18:35). Thus, those who do not forgive *from the heart* prove they have never received God's forgiveness. To put it positively, all those whom God forgives will themselves turn and forgive others -- not just with lip service but with real, heartfelt, committed, intentional promises of pardon!

5. Intentionally — Forgiveness never just happens. It is a decision. It is a promise. It is a transaction that occurs. Forgiveness is when God, who is Himself omniscient, declares I will remember your sins no more. Of course, God in His infinite knowledge cannot *forget* sins, or the past. But God *intentionally chooses* not to hold sins against His people. He chooses to not bring the charges against His people. All who have faith in Christ and who are united to Christ by faith are forgiven by God. Thus, God says: I will forgive your sins and I will remember them no more.

6. Always — Believers must always forgive. Never should there be a thought lingering in a believer's heart full of unwillingness to grant forgiveness. Never should there be an occasion where a person may ask for forgiveness (believer or unbeliever) and the professing Christian

would refuse to give it. Just as our God always forgives His children so we must always be willing to forgive others.

7. Biblically — Biblical forgiveness is not ignorance. It's not imagining it doesn't exist. It's not buying one's way out of a problem. It's not shoving a problem away in a corner somewhere and pretending that it doesn't exist. It's not changing topics or refusing to talk about it just to 'keep peace'. Please hear, beloved! Forgiveness is a promise of pardon that entails three necessary elements: *First*, biblical forgiveness promises never to bring the offense up to the offender again. To grant forgiveness, one says that he will not keep a record of wrongs and constantly say: "*remember when you*" Biblical forgiveness does not count the offenses that others have done to him. *Second*, biblical forgiveness promises never to bring the offense up to other people. Thus, the person who grants forgiveness promises never to go to other people and slander the one who committed the offense. He will never go to others and backbite or slander or gossip or derail his reputation. This is not forgiveness! This is wholesale wickedness! Let God's people guard the reputation of others and when forgiveness is asked and granted, we must be swift and full in our promise to love them, reconcile with them, protect them, preserve their reputation and character, and never slander them to others by announcing their sins behind their back. And *third*, biblical forgiveness promises never to bring the offense up to my own self. This simply means that I promise to never dwell on one's sins in my own heart again and again and again. This is harboring anger. This is the root of bitterness. This is the root of murder. Let no offense that has been committed to us be swimming in our hearts and minds for then bitterness, anger, revenge, and evil deeds will soon follow. Let us be swift to biblically forgive all people who offend us and ask for forgiveness.

Beloved, do you see how great God's love and forgiveness is toward you? Do you understand the incalculable weight of sin that you have committed against God and how God has freely and fully pardoned you *by grace*? Do you see how many endless mountains of abominable iniquities you have done against the impeccable and glorious God of mercy and yet how He has pardoned you when you repented of sin and trusted in Christ? Do you see this? Do you see how God *never* holds your sins against you? Do you see your Savior in heaven who intercedes for you and pleads on your behalf (Heb 7:25)? Dear Christian, you must forgive this way. The Apostle Paul writes that all believers are to forgive one another *just as* God in Christ also has forgiven you (Eph 4:32). That means that in the same way that God has forgiven you so you should also forgive others.

Two additional thoughts and applications should be given to believers. First, all must heed the warning of unforgiveness. Jesus stated earlier in His great Galilean ministry: "If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matt 6:14-15). O dear friends, hear these sobering words! Christ says that if you truly live as an unforgiving person, then hear the wise and loving words of our Savior, you are an unforgiven person yourself. Thus, if you are unforgiven, then you are lost. And if you are lost, then you're a child of hell. And if you're a child of hell, you'll end up in hell suffering justly for your sin at the hands of God

forevermore in the Lake of Fire. O beloved friends: examine your heart! Is there *any* root of bitterness? If so, slay it! Make war with your sin of unforgiveness! Be warned!

And second, all believers must happily give forgiveness to any and all who have sinned against you and ask for forgiveness. Are there those who have committed a sin against you? Are there those who come to you -- even again, and again, and again -- and plead for your forgiveness? Have you granted it? Have you forgiven *in your heart*? Have you promised to pardon the sin and never to bring it up to them, to others, or to your own self? O precious children of God, let us proclaim the gospel by the way that we forgive others. Let us demonstrate faithfully and accurately a God who willingly and graciously forgives sin as we as His people faithfully and lavishly forgive others who have offended us.

JR Miller has a fitting word of conclusion:

“A lesson which is taught so plainly by our Lord and emphasized by so many repetitions, must be a most important one. The duty of forgiving others is not merely one of the refinements of Christian culture, something which adds to the beauty of a Christian character, though not essential to it; rather it is a vital element in every true Christian life. Unless we have forgiven those who have wronged us—we cannot ask God to forgive us. Luther uses strong language: "When you say, 'I will not forgive,' and stand before God with your prayer, and mumble with your mouth, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' what is that but saying: 'I do not forgive him—and so do not forgive me. You have told me to forgive, and rather than obey—I will renounce you, and your heaven, and all, and be the devil's for evermore!'"”

And again, he comments:

“The lesson [of forgiveness] is not an easy one to learn. It is against nature. Only the grace of God in us—will enable us to freely forgive others. The spirit of forgiveness, is really the shedding abroad in us of the love of God by the Holy Spirit. When we know that we are forgiven, we are born anew, born from above; heaven has come down into our heart. We receive God's forgiveness, when we receive it truly, not as something to keep only for ourselves—but as a blessing which we are to spread abroad, whose grace we are to manifest and extend to others.”

V.4c And lead us not into temptation.

In the final petition in our Lord's model prayer that He provides to His disciples, holiness is earnestly sought. This final petition is: “And lead us not into temptation.” Much can be said regarding this pregnant phrase so we want to carefully look at its meaning and its application. In a word, this final petition holds God to His own promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 when he says that no temptation has overtaken us but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation *will provide the way of escape*. Thus we see that this final petition that our Lord counsels us to pray is to hold God to His Word and to earnestly implore Him to guard us from sin -- all sin, and even the pathway to sin.

A few important elements arise when we take a closer look at this petition. First, we must understand that God never tempts anyone nor directly causes anyone to sin. James says that God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). But James continues to note that each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust and then when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished it brings forth death (James 1:14-15). So God does not directly tempt anyone or coerce anyone into sin. So this petition is not asking God to *not* do something that He promises to *never* do. Second, we must understand what our Lord's counsel to us does mean. It speaks to the humble response of God's people who understand their own frail nature and proneness to stumble into sin and it is the desperate plea of the child of God to ask God to *protect* and *preserve* us from even the situation that may in fact lure us into a sin. As Robert Robertson wrote centuries ago: "prone to wander, Lord, I feel it." And how every child of God can understand that statement.

This is the final petition and it should be instructive to our hearts to leave this final impression on our hearts as it flows from our lips to the throne of grace. This is a desperate and humble plea from the believer's lips to God for protection so as to not stumble into sin.

A handful of points should be borne in mind here. First, it is a humble yet bold prohibition. It is the psalmist saying: *please do not bring me*; or, don't let me enter into; or, do not allow me to fall into the situation. It is a bold imperative entreating God to protect and preserve us and prohibit us from entering into a temptation. Second, we must express a confident trust in our God who is able to protect us from stumbling. This prayer is addressed singularly and solely to God -- [*You, O God*], *do not bring me*. Thus, we as believers must evidence a wholehearted confidence in God to protect us from temptations. Third, our Lord tells us to pray for this even with a corporate mentality. Do not bring *us* into temptation. It's not just a singularly individualistic prayer -- although this most certainly is included. But our Lord instructs us to pray corporately for us as the people of God to be guarded from temptation. O how the body of Christ can be affected when even one person stumbles into sin and gives into temptation. O how this can tarnish a sparkling gospel-witness in the community! Let us pray often, boldly, and earnestly for God's protection to guard *us* from temptation as the people of God. Fourth, this prayer expresses an unashamed passion to stay entirely removed from sinful situations for he prays: "do not bring us *into temptation*. To be in a tempting situation may not in itself be inherently sinful. Of course, we cannot keep ourselves from every situation that *could* bring about a sinful temptation. Yet the prayer, however, bubbles forth from the heart of a regenerated child of God who honestly wants God to intervene and protect His people from even taking him *near* a situation where, in a moment of weakness, he could stumble into transgression. Notice how seriously this petition takes sin -- even the temptation!

JR Miller comments on this:

"Thus testing always implies the possibility of failure. There is no experience, in which we may not sin. There is a wrong alternative, in every call to that which is right. Instead of doing the duty—we may neglect it. Instead of making the self-denial or sacrifice—we may decline it. Instead

of resisting the sin—we may yield to it. Temptation always brings an opportunity to overcome, to grow stronger. But if we fail to use the opportunity we sin.”

And again:

“It is right, therefore, for us to shrink from sore testing, not to be disobedient to any call of God—but even to ask to be spared the experiences, knowing something of the fearful peril there is for us in them.”

We as believers must remember that God does not Himself tempt us to sin. He does, of course, test His people so as to grow them and to mature them in their faith. And this He does with a Fatherly disposition toward His beloved children. But let all children of God remember that “the heart is the breeder of all evil. Our own hearts are the greatest tempters. Everyone is a *Satan* to himself. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." The heart is a perfect bait to temptation (James 1:14)” (Thomas Watson). Indeed, even Satan is the grand and ultimate Tempter (Matt 4:3).

All of this instructs us to, *first*, learn to hate sin. We as the people of God must hate what God hates and love what He loves (Heb 1:8). Our God hates iniquity and lawlessness (Prov 8:13; Prov 6:16-18). Let us learn to imitate our God (Eph 5:1) and fervently hate all lawlessness. *Second*, let us learn to forsake sin. Proverbs 28:13 tells us that true confession and repentance is when one confesses *and forsakes* sin. Sin must not only be confessed; it must be cut off and removed. It must be forsaken. If a root of sin has taken hold in your heart, your duty before God and instruction by God is to forsake that sin entirely and in all of its parts as if it is a venomous serpent that will destroy you (1 Cor 6:18). *Third*, let us learn to mortify sin. Thomas Watson has memorably put it: “When sin is being mortified, Satan is being crucified.” And how true this is. Paul instructs the believers in Colossae to mortify the members of their earthly bodies -- sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desires, greed, idolatry (Col. 3:5). Believers must make war with sin and eradicate the monstrous evil of sin -- every single sin. We must take pains to not permit any sin to take residence in our hearts for sin never remains little, small, and unnoticed. Like a root, it will rise up through the surface and become visible and, over time, it will become stronger and stronger and be harder to break off. So, then, let us seek to mortify the flesh and slay our sin. *Fourth*, let us learn to flee from sin. Like a contagious disease, let us flee from sin so that it will not infect us. Do not permit your souls be contaminated with filth as you endeavor to walk near to your God. And *fifth*, let us learn to trust God and resist the devil (James 4:7). Even our Savior was led by the devil into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt 4:1). Let us resist the devil trust in our God’s power to deliver (Zech 4:6). All of this is to be incorporated in the final petition whereby we beg God to protect us from sin and from the Evil One (cf. Matt 6:13).

This petition not only includes God’s protection from specific sins but it even encompasses the entire path that leads one into the *temptation* that could then allure a person to sin. Thus, this asks God not even to bring us into situations which may not in and of themselves be sinful but a temptation might arise while in that circumstance. And this is a prayer of confident trust in the

Rock of Ages to guard us from taking our eyes off of the beauty of Christ and allowing them to be lured to other temporary, trite, momentary, earthly pleasures here.

O people of God, let us grow in our love for God so much that the earthly lusts do not win our hearts away from Christ's beauty. Let us fix our souls upon the ultimate and lasting beauty of Christ so that we do not veer away from him onto the temporary glistening of earthly lusts and pleasures. Let us so love Christ that anything that does not accelerate our love for Him is avoided! Let us so adore our Savior that anything that does not stimulate and cultivate a greater intimacy with Him is rejected! Let us so honor and magnify our great God that we are afraid even to walk down the street where we may be trapped. Let us be guarded against the thinking that: "I can go to this or that place and indulge in this or that conversation or watch this or that without being defiled." The question must *never* be: how close can I get to the viper of sin and not get bit and infected by its deadly poison! Rather, the question must *always* be: how near can I walk with my God so that I am so enraptured with His wondrous beauty and everlasting delight that worldly lusts and earthly trinkets do not allure me away from Him!

All believers should bless God for His Spirit who protects us from the Evil One and who guards us in our moments of weakness. He protects and preserves us till glory as our pledge (Eph 1:13-14) and our God keeps us from stumbling (Jude 24-25). Let us live by His power and in His strength so that we would flee from sin and follow after righteousness (2 Tim 2:22).

Let all readers be warned! This final petition is a humble plea for holiness! It is the Christian's cry for total consecration to God! Do you have this? Do you long for this? Does your soul cry to be like Jesus? Do you earnestly hate your sin? Really? Do you zealously engage in good deeds in service to your Savior and to His people, the body of Christ? Remember what the author to the Hebrews says: "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

