



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 6:9–15

Gospel of Matthew

“The Lord’s Prayer: A Primer for Prayer”

TRANSCRIPT

For the Scripture reading this morning, we are turning to Matthew chapter 6, and reading the passage that is known to most of us as the Lord’s Prayer. Matthew chapter 6, verse 9 through verse 15. Now really, the prayer ends at verse 13, but verses 14 and 15 are very closely connected with the prayer, and so I’m going to read those two verses as part of the Scripture reading. The 9th verse,

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever. Amen.”

May I insert a word there? That last statement, “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen,” is not found in the most ancient of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and is probably not a genuine part of this prayer. Evidently, an early scribe added these words. They’re certainly appropriate; we have no questions about the applicability of the doctrine

expressed by them, but they really do not form part of the Lord’s Prayer. Then we read verses 14 and 15:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also
forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will
your Father forgive your trespasses.”

May God bless this reading from his Word.

There are many prayers in the Word of God. We remember the prayers of Moses. We have many, many of the petitions that David brought to the God of the Old Testament. We have petitions from Elijah. We have petitions from Daniel. We have our Lord’s own petitions, and we have the great prayers of the Apostle Paul.

Among the many prayers in the Word of God, this may be the most misunderstood of them all, insofar as its interpretation is concerned. It is a messianic prayer. It is a prayer that is distinguished by the 10th verse in which there is this anticipation of the coming of the messianic kingdom. “Thy kingdom come,” the Lord Jesus has made a part of this prayer.

Now of course, when we think of the statement, Thy kingdom come, now it is usually colored by the fact that the term, kingdom, has become a church word. And, often, it is identified with the church. The church and the kingdom are confused in our thinking as a result of this common misconception. But when this petition was first given by Jesus Christ, and he said, “Thy kingdom come,” he understood that word kingdom—as did those who heard him offer this model prayer—in the Old Testament sense of the messianic kingdom that had been promised through many, many centuries of prophetic teaching. They looked forward to the time when the Messiah would come and establish an earthly kingdom. The length of that kingdom is not given in the Old Testament; it is given in the New. But they spoke of the grandeurs of the time when God would reign upon the earth.

Now words in the New Testament are ordinarily interpreted in the light of the sense that they had in the developing revelation of God—that is, in the sense in which they had in the Old Testament. So when we read here, Thy kingdom come, we are to understand that this is a petition for the coming of our Lord’s rule and reign over the earth. Now I dare say that in most of our congregations in which this Lord’s Prayer is repeated Sunday after Sunday all over this land (just to mention the United States), that petition is not understood.

Not only that, this Lord’s Prayer is a model prayer. It is really a kind of primer of prayer. It is designed to be instructive, but it was never, so far as I can tell, intended to be prayed itself. We read, for example, in the 9th verse, in order to support this, “after this manner, therefore, pray ye.”

Now it’s a strange fact that in a group of Christians, who make the claim that they are following the teachings of Holy Scripture, should repeat, Sunday after Sunday a petition that is called a model prayer, particularly in the light of a context in which the Lord Jesus has said, just two or three verses previously in the text, when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do. I think it is evident from this, and the context of it, that this prayer is intended to be a kind of pattern of prayer, and was never intended by our Lord to be repeated Sunday after Sunday in our churches. There are other prayers that we might pray than this particular petition.

Now I want to hasten to say that I do think that it is a sin for a congregation to repeat this prayer. I can imagine that it’s possible for a congregation, Sunday after Sunday, to repeat this prayer, understanding it in its true sense, and to repeat it in the sense of true faith. I think that is possible.

But having grown up in a church in which this was done constantly, as far as I remember—I remember when I was a little child sitting in the congregation, just like you little children, and there was listening to the repetition of this particular prayer—the prayer was never explained. I entered into the repetition of it. I still remember that it was not until I was a teenager at least that I saw this prayer in print and realized that “hallowed be Thy name” was not “how will be thy name.” I repeated it that way for years.

Now I think it is possible for us to repeat it properly, and I do not want to be overly critical, and say that it is impossible for a church to truly enter into the spirit of the Lord’s Prayer repeating it Sunday after Sunday. But from personal experience, and from the testimonies of others, I think it is fair to say that in most of the congregations in which a petition is repeated over and over again, it becomes largely meaningless.

I remember the story of two men who were talking about spiritual things, and finally, the subject of some of the familiar passages of the Word of God came up. And one of them made the rash bet that he could repeat the Lord’s Prayer. The other person said, “I’ll take you up.”

So they made a wager, and he began to repeat. He said, “Now I lay me down to sleep, [laughter] I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.”

The other fellow listened very intently. He said, “I didn’t think you could do it. [Laughter] Here’s your money.” Now I dare say they had repeated that prayer in the congregation, but it did not mean anything to them.

In one sense, this petition is misnamed. We call it, “The Lord’s Prayer.” He is its author, and if that is the sense in which we mean “The Lord’s Prayer,” then, I think it is properly called the Lord’s Prayer. But in the light of the fact that he gave it as a model prayer—as a primer, as a pattern of prayer—it would be just as proper to call it, “The Disciples’ Prayer.” It is a prayer that our Lord Jesus never prayed. And furthermore, it is a prayer that our Lord Jesus could not have prayed. We read, for example, in “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” and that is something that Jesus Christ could not pray.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee, who is a friend of many of you in the congregation, has a sermon on this particular prayer which he entitles, “The Prayer Our Lord Did Not Pray.” Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who was Professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Seminary and the founder of the institution, occasionally made reference to the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew chapter 6 when teaching

John chapter 17. The latter passage was one of his favorite passages, and almost inevitably, he would introduce it by comparing that great high priestly petition from John chapter 17 and this prayer here.

And he would say that John chapter 17 should have been called, “The Lord’s Prayer,” because it was a prayer that he prayed. And it is an outstanding petition—probably the greatest individual prayer of the whole of the Scriptures. But nevertheless, it is the Lord’s Prayer, and we cannot possibly now, in 19[7]6, reverse the whole terminology of the Christian church down through the centuries. We shall call it the Lord’s Prayer because he is the author of it, and acknowledge that that is proper in that sense.

It is a prayer, then, to guide the disciples at the time of the offering of the kingdom to the nation Israel. Let us never forget the Lord Jesus came as a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, in behalf of the truth of God, and that the Gentiles might glorify him for his mercy. And so during this period of time, when he was the minister of the circumcision, confirming the promises to the fathers, he gave them this petition to guide them in their prayer life. So it’s a beautiful section of the Word of God, and contains many lessons for us. We look, now, at some of these lessons.

It is divided into two parts. The first part of this prayer has to do with petitions for God’s glory. And the second part has to do with petitions for man’s need. The first three of the petitions have to do with God and the glory of God, and we look at the very first one of them.

“After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” What a beautiful beginning for a prayer. “Hallowed” is one of the great words of the King James Bible. I noticed in the New International Version, they could not think of any other word—a version that is designed to translate the Bible into modern English—they couldn’t think of any word better than “hallowed.” Hallowed be Thy name. As you well know, that word is the word that means, in other places, sanctification, or holy, or holiness—the root. So, “hallowed be Thy name” means “let Thy name be sanctified.”

Now sanctified means “set apart.” So the petition, then, is a petition for the setting apart from other names of the name of God. The Lord introduces this petition with the words, “Our Father,” which in a senses, are a kind of compact summary of the entire Christian faith in the minds of some. Our Father.

We could never call God Father were it not for the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. And by virtue of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, we are able to call him Father. We have no right to call God, our Father, if we have not responded to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus.

One of the men whose comments on the Gospel of Matthew I’ve been citing from time to time, Professor William Barkley of the University of Glasgow in Scotland, has written, “If we believe that God is Father, it settles our relationship to our fellow men. If God is Father, he is the Father of all men. The Lord’s Prayer did not teach us to pray, ‘my Father,’ it teaches us to pray ‘our Father.’”

That is a misunderstanding of our Lord’s petition. When the Lord Jesus said to pray, “our Father,” he was not suggesting that God was the Father of all men. The very fact that he says “our Father” means that he referred to the company of the faithful. True, he did not say, “Pray to my Father,” because he was speaking to a group of men. He said, “Pray, our Father,” but he is speaking to disciples. All one has to do is to go back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and ascertain the fact that he was speaking to those who have made profession of faith in him.

It is not true at all that God is the Father of all men. He is not. Now, he is the God of all men, in the sense that he has created all, and we are his offspring in that sense. But he is not our Father in this truly redemptive relationship introduced by the saving work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. So, when we read, “After this manner **therefore** pray ye, Our Father,” he’s speaking to the company of the saints, the company of the faithful, the believing company, and he invites them to say, “Our Father.”

This was a very startling thing for the Lord Jesus to say. If you go back and study Rabbinic Judaism—or Palestinian Judaism, to enlarge it a little bit—if you go back and study **Palestinian** Judaism, you will discover that we have no record of anyone ever saying that we have the right to call God, “our

Father.” As a matter of fact, the reference of God as Father is found only about fourteen times in the Old Testament, and always in a collective sense, never in the sense of an individual praying and speaking to God as his Father.

And yet, the Lord Jesus appears on the scene. He calls God his own Father, so much so that those who heard him and who were his enemies accused him of making himself equal with God, and now he invites others by virtue of what he will do, to enter in to this relationship of calling God, Father.

This statement of calling God Father is the answer to Lessing’s question, “Is there a friendly universe?” Yes, there is for those who’ve come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. This is a friendly universe for them, and the fact that he invites us to say “our Father” is a testimony to it.

I think this fact that he asks us to call him “our Father” is full of significance for those who know what it is to have a father. I’ve often spoken to some of you about my father. He was a man I greatly respected. I see his picture in my study every day now—I’m delighted—because I can look up and remember the ways in which he was an ideal father for me.

I did not respond to many of the things that he said to me, and particularly things that concerned the Scripture. And I can still remember him getting very angry with me for my unbelief. He didn’t know exactly how to respond to my unbelief. He thought it was so unusual that somebody in the family should respond to the Word of God in the way that I was. But he was an outstanding father to me. I knew that I could always come to him in moments of need. I do not remember that he ever failed to meet the needs that I had as an individual and often went far beyond what probably he should have done. But I respected him, and I truly loved him, and I knew that at any moment, I could pick up the telephone here in Dallas, and I could call him, and I would have a responsive ear.

And I know what it means to have a true father. And what a wonderful thing it is to have a heavenly Father. Our Father, who art in heaven. I know that in the midst of all the trials of life, I do not pick up the telephone, but I know I can get down upon my knees, and I can lift my voice and

say, Father, and I know I have his ear, and I know he will always respond. Occasionally, he’ll respond by saying it’s necessary for me to discipline you a little bit, but nevertheless, he’s a Father, and he will ultimately care for all my needs. I love that word. It’s the source of all the blessings of a believing Christian: our Father.

I remember the story of a man who was up in one of the meetings—he may have been in one of the meetings of Believers Chapel—because he was beating all around the bush, trying to come to the point about petitions. And he was making all kinds of flowery phrases about the glory of God, and it just seemed that he was not going to come to the point at all, and finally, an elderly lady in the congregation couldn’t resist it and shouted out, “Call him Father and ask him for something!”

[Laughter] Our Father, who art in heaven.

Now the fact that the Lord Jesus adds the words “who art in heaven” is of importance to us, too, because that reminds us of the infinite distance between the natures of the Father, and the natures of the Son, and the natures of the sons. He is our Father who art in heaven.

In my case, my father lived in Charleston, South Carolina, and so he was my father who art in Charleston. But this is a father who exists in heaven: our Father who art in heaven. And because he’s in heaven, he’s separated from sinners. We should never forget that fact. He’s not like an earthly father in that sense. His entire nature is so unique and different, that the Lord Jesus must impress that upon us by saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” As the writer of the Epistle of Hebrews says, “He is separated from sinners; holy, harmless and undefiled.”

There was a little boy once who was asked the question, “If the Lord’s Prayer speaks of God as in heaven, how then do you harmonize that with the fact that God is said to be everywhere?” And he had on a little uniform, and he replied, “Why, that’s his headquarters.” And so I guess that’s the sense in which our Lord is using this. Our Father, who art in heaven. It’s true. He’s everywhere. But those are headquarters.

Hallowed be Thy name. Now hallowed, as I mentioned earlier, means let your name be sanctified. Let it be set apart, for that’s the meaning of sanctified. Now what does that mean,

essentially? Why, it means that we are to treat the name of God differently from all other names.

Hallowed be Thy name. The name of God is not like any other name. It’s different, and it should be treated differently. And that of course brings us to the question: what does “Thy name” mean—hallowed be Thy name?

Now, I think you’d have to be a dweller of the east to understand at first reading what is meant by “hallowed be Thy name.” For, the term “name” referred to the nature or character of a person. We sometimes use it in that sense, but not always. Generally, we speak of “name” as that moniker—to use a slang term—by which we are distinguished from others. What’s his name? We don’t reply, “Why, it’s good.” We usually say, “It’s John Doe,” something like that.

But the name for them meant, primarily, the nature. We do, however, say, he has a good name, and we don’t mean that his name is Lewis Johnson. That’s not a particularly good name. We mean by that his character is good.

Now when we read in this petition, “hallowed be Thy name,” we are referring to the nature or character of God. What shall we say of the name of God? Why he has revealed his name to us in creation. We read, “The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament showeth his handiwork.” He has revealed to us in the creation the fact that he is the omnipotent God. He has revealed his name to Moses in a peculiar sense. He said to Moses, when Moses asked for his name, “I AM who I AM,” and he spoke of himself in that text as being the only self-existent being in all of the universe.

He is the only person who has his being from himself. He’s the only person who is not a dependent being. Every one of you in this auditorium—even you young people who are in the flush of health—you are dependent beings, and you have your life from someone else. He does not have his life from someone else. His life arises from within his own infinite being. He is the self-existent God; I AM who I AM, completely independent of his creation.

John speaks of him in the book of Revelation as the Alpha and the Omega, and even that’s insufficient. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and omega is the last letter of the Greek

alphabet, and he is the alpha and the omega—he’s the beginning and the end—but he’s also before the beginning and he’s after the end. He is the eternal, self-existent God. Hallowed be Thy name.

Now if you’ll turn to Scripture, you’ll find some amazing things said about God—even his names and descriptions are remarkable for the **expression of the** character and nature of God. He is called, in the Word of God, *El Shaddai*—the shuddering name, the Hebrews said, because it speaks of him in his mighty power. He is called *Jehovah Jireh*, or *Yahweh Jireh*. That, of course, is the name that speaks of him as the one who by virtue of the mystery of redeeming love, providing all of the needs to those who are related to him. He is *Jehovah Rapha*, the healer. He is *Jehovah Nissi*, the Lord my banner. He is *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, the Lord our righteousness, because it is he himself, who by virtue of the saving work of Christ, has become the basis of right-standing before God. And the Lord himself is our standing, our righteousness, because he is our representative having accomplished the work of atonement for those for whom he came to die. So he is *Jehovah Tsidkenu*—I love that expression—the Lord our righteousness. Be forever thankful for Jeremiah for listening to the Lord at that point, and giving that to us. He is *Jehovah Shalom*, or, the Lord our peace. And he is *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord who is there; a reference to the restoration, finally, when God’s people shall dwell with him.

The greatest revelation of the name of God, of course, comes in the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself, and you’ll remember that in that last high priestly prayer, that when he reaches the end of that last petition, he says, “I have declared Thy name.” So by virtue of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, there has been a revelation of the name of God. To others, he’s the great and distant anonymous, but to us he is revealed perfectly in the Lord Jesus, and his name partakes of all the character of the saving work of the Lord Jesus.

How evil, then, is the evil of idolatry. Idolatry is the substitution of some other name for the name of God. I’m delighted my little grandchildren—who are not here this morning—but I’m delighted my little grandchildren are somewhere getting some biblical instruction. My granddaughter, whose with me here in the city now, came into my study the other morning, and I had a paperweight from some company that sent it to me—I don’t even remember who it is; I think it’s an insurance

company—and it’s a bronze cow. And I had it sitting over on some on periodicals in my study on one of the shelves. And she’s just six years of age. She walked in the room. She walked around. She took a look over at that shelf, and she said, “Da-da, why do have an idol in your study?” [Laughter]

I never thought of it that way [more laughter], but idolatry, of course, is the basic evil. All idolaters—though not all in equal degree—intercept the idea of God, and they do this through the prism of some representative creature, that partially resembles God. But when you intercept the idea of the God of Scripture, through the prism of some representative creature that partially resembles God, then you refract, you splinter, and

you distort the idea of God. That’s why any representation of God is a distortion of God. And that is why, in the Ten Commandments, we begin with this command that we shall not have any other gods before him. And any other excuses that it’s a help to enable me to remember God do not in any way transform that fact that if we seek to represent God by any part of his creation, we distort the true idea of God.

Hallowed be Thy name—what a great petition. I wish I had time to spend on all of the others to that degree. But we must hasten, now, to go through the remainder of the petitions.

“Thy kingdom come.” This is a prayer for sovereignty. It is a prayer for the messianic kingdom, so that every time we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we’re asking the Son of God to come a second time to establish his rule and reign upon the earth for a thousand years in order that this creation which is responsible to him for its very being shall honor and glorify him as Redeemer, as Creator, as King, as Superintendent of the affairs of all that he has made.

The third petition in the latter part of verse 10 is, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Now when we think about the will of God, we must distinguish two of his wills. There is, of course, his decretive will. That decretive will is the will of God that determines everything that is going to come to pass. Daniel speaks of this in the 4th chapter, in the 35th verse of his great prophecy when he says, “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand and say unto him, ‘What doest Thou?’” And so he does according to his determinate

will. The Lord Jesus went to the cross at Calvary according to the decretive will of God. It was his determining will, established in the councils of eternity, that the Son of God should suffer for our sins at the cross at Calvary.

There is also the preceptive will of God. The preceptive will of God is what we see in holy Scripture as that which pleases him. Now his preceptive will does not always come to pass. His preceptive will is what pleases him, but we often do things that displease him. But we cannot do contrary to his decretive will. His decretive will determines all things that are going to come to pass.

Now what does the Lord mean when he says, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? This is, then, a petition that we are to pray, by which we are to pray that on earth, the things that are done upon earth shall be pleasing to the God who dwells in heaven and dwells in the midst of a sphere in which things are done with respect to his will. So this is a prayer, then, that the matters which concern his preceptive will will be pleasing to him. And we know from the teaching of Holy Scripture that during the Millennial Age, when the Lord Jesus rules and reigns upon the earth, his will will be done in the earth as it is in heaven. So this, then, is a petition for willing submission to the preceptive will of God.

It’s striking that among men that this is not done. I have listed in the *Believer’s Bible Bulletin* a couple of illustrations of men, surprising men in a way—not Swinburn—but Beethoven, who died in utter rebellion against God, with a snarl upon his lips and his fists clenched against God in heaven. This, then, is a petition that the will of God may be done on earth, during that kingdom, as it is now done in heaven.

We come, then, to the latter part of the petition, and the petitions for man’s need. The emphasis of the first section has been upon the Father. This one is upon the Father’s family. And the first of these petitions is, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Incidentally, he says “daily bread,” not daily cake. He doesn’t tell us that we shall have the luxuries of life, but he asks us to pray that our daily needs may be met.

It may surprise you to know that this word “daily” was the subject of a great deal of scholarly discussion for a rather lengthy period of time. It was thought to mean something like “daily,” but there was no evidence of anything from the Greek language that gave proof of that. But sometime ago, in the discoveries of the papyri, a little sheet of papyrus was discovered, and this word was found upon it: *epiousios*. And it was used in connection with a woman’s grocery shopping list. So it was a word that meant “daily.” Give us this day our daily bread.

Now of course, that does not mean that we are to be surprised if the Lord should bring us upon difficult times in which we do not know where the meals for tomorrow should come. This would seem to anticipate that we should expect some of that. I can assure you, I have been through seminary, and I have been through seminary on a very small amount of money. And I learned that this petition from our Lord is one upon which we can rely with confidence. Elijah, in the Old Testament, was fed by the ravens, and then he was fed by the widow. He had constant experience of the sense and disposition of this particular petition.

There’s a lovely story of John Wesley and Samuel Bradburn. I love this, because it’s such a beautiful expression of some of the experiences that all preachers have had. And Mr. Bradburn, was one of Mr. Wesley’s preachers, and a very close friend of his, and Wesley heard that he was suffering quite a bit, and had, really, a great, desperate financial need. So Mr. Wesley took a 5 pound note—which used to mean something, at least in Wesley’s days—he put it in a letter, and he sent it off to Bradburn, and he said, “Dear Sammy, trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt Thou dwell in the land and verily, thou shalt be fed. Yours affectionately, John Wesley.”

And Bradburn promptly replied, “Reverend and dear sir, I’ve often been struck with the beauty of the passage of Scripture quoted in your letter, but I must confess, that I’ve never seen such useful, expository notes on it before. [Laughter] I am, reverend and dear sir, your obedient and grateful servant, S. Bradburn.” Give us this day our daily bread. I am sure that Mr. Bradburn had the experience of giving thanks to God for the fact that he does supply our daily needs.

And then the fifth of the petitions is a petition for pardon: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Now we need to distinguish between the judicial and eternal forgiveness that comes from God, and the paternal forgiveness that exists within the family.

Bible scholars debate this a little bit, and occasionally on the campus of Dallas Seminary, there has been a debate over whether there is such a thing as family forgiveness. I realize that a great deal can be said on the other hand, but in my opinion, from the study of the Scriptures, there is such a thing as the paternal forgiveness, the forgiveness that a father renders to a child. It is to be distinguished from the judicial and eternal forgiveness that we receive when we believe in the Lord Jesus. When we see Christ as the one who has died for our sins, and when we have put our trust in him and receive the forgiveness of sins, that forgiveness of sins covers the past, the present and the future. But, it has to do with the guilt of our sin; it has to do with that which destroyed the relationship that existed, and it makes it possible for the relationship to be restored—the relationship of union with God.

But within the family of God, just as within our own families—our own children—our own children may do things that displease us. Now, this does not destroy the relationship, but it certainly destroys the communion. It destroys the fellowship, and that, I think, is what is taught in the Word of God, that when Christians disobey the Father, it destroys the fellowship. It does not destroy the relationship. It destroys the communion; it does not destroy the union.

And so when we read, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” I am inclined to think that this has to do with the paternal forgiveness which all believers receive as they confess the things that displease the Lord.” And this is a petition that, undoubtedly, many of us must pray constantly. Forgive us our debts, the things that we owe. Over in the Lukan account, it is “Forgive us our trespasses.” It is a reference to sins, not the debts of a financial kind.

As we forgive our debtors. Now that last clause seems to add a condition to it. I think the explanation that is given to it in the Scofield Reference Bible is true at this point. Incidentally, I think all new Christians ought to read through the Scofield edition of the King James Version, just for the

notes at the bottom of the page. It’s a kind of course in systematic theology, and I think it would be an excellent way to begin a study of the Word of God, but only in the beginning. But Mr. Scofield does have some interesting notes about “as we forgive our debtors”—in fact, this entire petition.

What he means is simply this: that those who have been truly forgiven by God necessarily manifest a forgiving spirit. And that forgiving spirit is the evidence that we have truly been born again. So when we read, in verse 14, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; and if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,” that is the manifestation of the evidence of the new birth.

I find it very difficult to believe that an individual who has come to understand how much he has been forgiven can have an unforgiving spirit towards his fellow believers. I find it very difficult to believe that it is possible for an unforgiving spirit to rest in the heart of a Christian who knows that he has been forgiven, and forgiven things that are far greater than these other things, which appear so difficult for him to respond to.

Well, the final petition follows in verse 13: “And lead us not into testing, but deliver us from the evil one.” This is the desire that we not be brought to trial by the evil one. In the Old Testament we read, “God did tempt Abraham,” but the meaning is that he put him to the test. We have a beautiful support from the apostle Paul, for he states that when we do fall into testings, God is faithful, “He will not suffer us to be tested above that which we are able, but he will, with the testings (the same word that is used here) he will with the testing make the way to escape.” So, lead us not into temptation, or testing, but deliver us from the evil one—a petition that we all should constantly make.

The apostle Paul in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 17 and verse 18 speaks about his own experience in relation to it. He states, “Notwithstanding, the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that by me, the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will

preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” He had the confidence that God would deliver him.

May I close by just mentioning the lessons that stand out? First of all, the thing that stands out to me as I think about this petition again is the impressive fitness of it. In our petitions, when we come to God in prayer, God is first and our needs are second: hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. The proper response to God is to respond to him first and to our needs last.

And then, I think the second thing that strikes me—and this strikes me more and more as the years go by—is the striking shortness of this prayer. Last night, again, at my desk, I read through this prayer. Just read it through; I even included that addition, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, which is not part of the petition, but which we often repeat with it. The whole thing can be prayed in thirty seconds or less. What a beautiful illustration of the normal need for brevity in prayer. Right to the point. Thirty seconds or less. Now I’m not saying that we shouldn’t pray longer than that, but I do think a lot of our lengthy prayers could stand some purging in the light of this.

And finally, what a beautiful invitation this is from the Lord Jesus himself. Implicit in this is the kindness of a great heavenly Father, because it is a tremendous appeal to us that we pray. How important it is that we pray. It’s the secret of the effective Christian ministry. And all of you young men in the audience who are thinking about Christian ministry, this is the secret of an effective Christian ministry, if there is such a thing than can be called “a secret.” But it is just as much a secret to the spiritual life of every one of us.

John Bunyan said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray **until** you have prayed.” What a wonderful invitation, then it is: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”

If you’re here in this audience and you have never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, this petition, of course, is not a petition that you can put upon your lips, because you do not have this

relationship. You are not able to say, “Our Father.” That comes only through redemption, and the reception of the benefits of it by faith. May God give you grace to respond.

And for those of us who are Christians, may God move our hearts to use the invitation the Lord has given us, take the privilege, and pray. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

We praise Thee, Lord, for the gift of this model petition, a primer of prayer. Enable us, O God, to go on to advanced studies in the life of intercession.

And if there is someone present who has not yet come to the place where he can truly call Thee, “my Father,” give him no rest nor peace until they rest in him who has shed his blood for the sins of sinners.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.