

create us with physical needs, without being willing and able to provide for those needs.

The fact that all that is good in our lives come from God, leads us also to take care to use what we have in accordance with his will; with a generous and loving heart, and not selfishly or intemperately.

God does not give us daily provisions so that we can use them for sinful purposes, but rather so we can honour him in the using of them.

And while this petition encourages us to depend on God, it is not a once and for all dependence. Our petition is for "daily" bread, and we are encouraged to come to him each and every day to bring our needs before him, for his daily provision.

[Matthew 6:34]

God did not create the universe, and men and women everywhere, and then step back and let them get on with it. God desires, and the whole of this prayer affirms, a daily relationship of love and dependence, both for our positive needs, our practical bodily needs, as we have seen, and for our ongoing spiritual needs, including our daily release and protection from the damaging consequences of sin.

Next week we look at the fifth petition, our request for forgiveness of our sins, together with the surprising addition attached to that request.



## Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

### "Give us this day our daily bread"

Last week we saw how the knowledge of God as our father leads naturally to the desire that his perfect will be carried out and brought to fruition: in heaven, on earth and within each one of us.

We considered the need for God's help if we are to have the heart, the skill and the strength to obey him without hesitation or complaint, and were reassured by the knowledge that God's plan for us is good and kind.

It is vitally important that we understand God to be a good and loving God, otherwise we may doubt his motives.

Knowing God's goodness and trusting him, enables us to trust in the wisdom of his purposes, and reassures us of the reasonableness of surrendering ourselves and our will to him.

God is not capricious, he is not random or cruel. God loves us, cares for us, and can be relied upon to help and sustain us.

Having prayed for God's name to be hallowed, his kingdom to come, and his will be done, we have rightly aligned our hearts and purposes with his.

We have set out the boundaries for our lives, and set the context for the remaining petitions of the prayer.

The first three petitions concerned God and his person and purposes. The next three petitions concern us and our reliance on God to meet our needs both practical and spiritual. Today we look at the fourth petition, which appeals to God for practical help.

## “Give us this day our daily bread”

The first petition for ourselves, the fourth actual petition, concerns our immediate bodily needs.

On the face of it, there appears to be a shift in the prayer; there have been three petitions for God; his name, his kingdom and his will, and now we come to three petitions for ourselves.

Furthermore, the first petition for ourselves, concerns not our spiritual life but our bodily needs. It seems that things have got out of order. Surely, our bodily provision should be the last thing we think about.

The whole prayer consists of six petitions, the first four concern positive good, while the last two concern the mitigation of evil. The petition for our daily bread, is the last of the positive requests, made only after we have put ourselves in the right place before God.

Furthermore, as we have seen, as God's children, we have a very substantial and real interest in the first three petitions, each one of them, though directed to God, is actually for our very great benefit.

What remains after this petition is the request to be forgiven past evil, and kept free from future evil. That is, the limitation of the effects of evil in our lives.

Our request that God provide for our practical necessities, should not be seen as being, in any way, selfish or contrary to God's glory. By placing our need within the context of God's glory and purposes, it becomes a part of the manifestation of that glory, that God provide for his children.

God, as a loving father, is as honoured and glorified in meeting our practical needs, as he is in providing for our spiritual lives.

[Psalm 136:25]

When we ask God to meet these needs, this is expressed in terms of daily bread.

Bread is, of course, a fundamental staple for human life. It represents all that we need to live; food, drink, clothing and all physical provision.

What we are asking God for, however, is that which we need to live. This is not a request for wealth, for God to meet all the desires of our hearts, as if we expect God to make our wildest, and most indulgent dreams, come true.

This petition is the humble request of a trusting child, to a loving father. It is an expression of faithful dependence on God. Indeed, God is honoured when we turn to him, and look to him for the provision of our simplest needs.

[Romans 8:32]

At the same time as encouraging a faithful reliance on God, this petition also leads us to acknowledge that all good things we have, all that we enjoy, all that blesses us in each day, all comes from God's loving hand.

The idea that we have provided for ourselves through our own strength and our wisdom, and good efforts, is totally outside the attitude of this prayer.

[Deuteronomy 8:17-18]

By turning to God in this way, we are reaffirming our belief in his goodness, kindness and his willingness to sustain and provide for us. We ask because, we believe, we believe that God is good, and kind and capable: capable of doing all that we ask, and abundantly more.

God has already given us every good and spiritual thing in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is now perfectly reasonable that he would care for our bodies as well as our souls. God as our creator did not