

The Lord's Prayer: Our Pattern and Example

It is quite striking that our friend should read Genesis chapter 4, because the very closing verse of that chapter tells us the time when men began to pray unto the Lord. It is a wonderful mercy that we can pray, that God has made Himself approachable. When He banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, He could have left man completely in that state where God would not permit Him to approach in any way, but by showing Adam and Eve the way of sacrifice by pointing to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, even in Old Testament days, the church of Christ was encouraged, exhorted, commanded to come to God in prayer. So it is a wonderful privilege that we are permitted to approach God in that way. I think it was the late Mr Wood who once said that 'a house without prayer is like a house without a roof'. Of course, in our climate, when the rain does come, we would soon know the difference where there was no roof on the house. It was a very apt remark, because a prayerless life is one that is God-less, and if it God-less then it is on the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

Now, what is the Lord's Prayer? The first thing I would say is that I don't think we ought to call it the Lord's Prayer in one sense, the true Lord's prayer in my view is John 17. It is the prayer of our Lord for His church and for their ultimate glorification. We should perhaps really call the prayer that we consider this morning the prayer our Lord taught the disciples. I have no objection to people calling it the Lord's Prayer, but we have to be careful because there is at least one petition in our Lord's prayer, which our Lord would never need to apply to Himself in His holy humanity. He never needed to pray, as you and I need to pray. 'Forgive us our debts; as we forgive our debtors'. Our Lord never needed to pray that. So we are a little bit careful using the term Lord's Prayer, but we know what we mean, and may the Lord help us to understand a little of what the Lord intended when He taught His disciples this prayer.

Now the holy law of God was written by the finger of God, and twice it was given. You remember once when Moses broke the tables of stone in anger, in just anger, the Lord re-wrote the law of God and He didn't amend it, He didn't adapt it, He didn't qualify it, even though men had so quickly broken it. We live in a society when men are continually trying to adapt laws to suit man's fallen nature. Our Lord never did that and never will do that. This prayer has the same example up on it, the same stamp upon it. It sets before us how we should approach God and those things we should be asking for. Just as the law of God should be written in our hearts as a voice to our conscience, so this prayer should be written in our hearts as a motive by the Holy Spirit, as to how we should approach God and what we should be asking for.

Now there are three groups of petitions. In the first part of it, these relate to our relationship with God, just as in the law, the first part of the law has do with our relationship with God. And the second part of the law is to do with our relationship one with another, and so the second part of the Lord's prayer has to do with those things that we need in our daily lives and what we need before God in living here below. Now we read that John the Baptist, who was very much a praying man, he taught his disciples to pray. Now, he could only give them a form of words, and point them in the right direction, which I am sure he did, but when the Lord teaches to pray there is something added to it. When the disciples said 'Lord, teach us to pray', then they were really asking, or should have been asking, for the aid of the Holy Spirit. We read in Romans 8 that 'the Spirit also helpeth our

infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought'. It is a great mercy when the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray. It does seem in that chapter we read in Genesis, there began the moving of the Holy Spirit concerning the matter of prayer among men. Calvin said, 'No one will learn to pray aright, whose lips have not been schooled by the heavenly Teacher.' And it is a great question for you and I, have we been schooled in that way that John Calvin mentioned by the heavenly Teacher? Many of us can remember in our early days that we were taught a prayer to say at the end of the day. I'm not decrying that at all, that can be used by God to quicken an interest in prayer, a vital interest in prayer. But there came a day with many of us here I believe, when that prayer we were taught became deeper, because we began to pray in our prayers, and to understand what we had been asking for, and began to add other things to it that we felt we needed.

That little hymn that is often sung in the Sunday School, is a very apt one isn't it?

I often say my prayers

But do I ever pray?

And do the wishes of my heart

Go with the words I say?

I may as well kneel down

And worship gods of stone,

As offer to the living God

A prayer of words alone.

For words without the heart

The Lord will never hear;

Nor will He to those lips attend

Whose heart is not sincere.

Lord, teach me how to pray

And so the hymn goes on ...

Nor let me ask thee for thy grace,

Not feeling what I say.

A very necessary exposition of our need of prayer.

Now you know, those of you read and listen to the media, sometimes you hear of people climbing Everest. There are a group or tribe who live at the base of Everest called the Sherpas and they are Buddhists, and they have prayer wheels. Instead of actually saying their prayers, they touch these wheels as they go past and the wheels swirl round, apparently (it is foolish to think, really they are so blinded) they think these wheels say their prayers for them. We do not need, dear friends, anything like that. We need an Advocate above, our great High Priest the Lord Jesus, but we also need the personal prayers. Whirling wheels around will not do. You say, 'well surely we don't do things like that'. If we are just relying on an orthodox tradition, just relying on formal prayers thinking that appeases an angry God, there is something very wrong in our praying.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ then here gave to us a pattern of prayer, 'So pray ye.' He wasn't saying we should use these exact words every time we pray, but we are to follow the pattern set before us here, according to the pattern of these words, the tenor of these words 'So pray ye.' Now when we pray, we approach the whole of the Godhead. If you pray to one person of the Godhead, then you are praying to all three, they are one God.

Many years ago, in the cause at Manchester, in William Gadsby's time, there was a great controversy, because William Gadsby in his prayers often prayed to the Holy Spirit, and I think many of us here do as well. 'Spirit of Truth come down', we sometimes sing do we not, 'Reveal the things of God'. There was one man in his congregation (he was a minister actually) who vehemently contended: 'you should never pray to the Spirit, but only pray to God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ'. William Gadsby contended much that we were able to pray to all three Persons of the Trinity. The Lord Jesus Christ sets before us God the Father—He is the one to whom we approach, in a sense He is the ultimate one to whom we approach. We approach the Father by the Son, and it is the Holy Spirit who leads us through the Son to the Father. So, we may approach each of those three Persons in the Trinity. But the Lord Jesus Christ sets before us here particularly to approach God the Father. I would just remind you that the three persons of the Trinity are equal, co-equal, co-eternal, and one in mind and will and purpose, majesty, honour, praise, glory, everything they have is one. If you meet Jehovah Witnesses as you often do, and they begin to talk to you, they sound very plausible at first. You may ask them, 'Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?' 'Yes' they say 'we believe that'. But if you ask them 'Do you believe He is God the Son?' They will vehemently deny it, they don't believe in the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, they don't believe He is equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. They are of course completely wrong in that belief; it is serious error. That is something to remind them. When you do meet them, then do ask them that question, you will find that they will soon become quite angry, many of them. They do not believe in God the Son, they don't believe in the Trinity at all.

Here the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates there is a triune God who we are approaching, He is the Son of God. And now He is saying we should begin our prayers with 'Our Father', the divinely ordained relationship, with Christ and the members of His family, of whom He is the elder brother. Now it is not very current very often in the prayers we hear, the prayers that we pray, that we go direct to the Father. I think we may be remiss in that in many respects. I don't like the name Father being glibly used, some use it very glibly which is why some of us shy away from using it, but on the other hand we should not forget, the Lord Jesus Christ did say 'When ye pray, say, Our Father'. The very term 'our' means that there is a way to the Father through the Son, and we come to the Son through the Holy Spirit.

Again, there was a minister who used to preach at Coventry many, many years ago, before my time. And he quite often used the term 'Father'. The deacons took him to one side, 'We feel it is unwise using that term'. The Godly man said 'Well, I know what you mean, it is used glibly by many, but if I cannot call God my Father, then surely I am doubting whether I am His child?' Now, I can see where the man was coming from. And we do not want false assumption and false presumptions. Now the Lord Jesus Christ did say 'When ye pray, say, Our Father'. When the spirit of adoption, when the Holy Ghost comes into the heart of a child of God, and creates him a child (which he was not before), then there is access to the Father of that child through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So, when our Lord rose from the dead and met His disciples, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God'. So, we have then this relationship, a blessed relationship. It is repeated again and again through Scripture. 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him', 'your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things', 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust'. So, again and again this precious relationship is spoken of. But it is an adopted relationship—by nature, you and I were not born into the family of God. That's why we should be very careful when we use this term 'Our Father' that we don't put into the mouths of those that have no right, as yet, to say it. Many of us, of course, would have learnt to say it at school many years ago. Every day began with saying 'Our Father', and in one sense that is a good way to begin for those who were sincere in their prayers. Many years ago, in the late nineteenth century, there was a God-fearing teacher. He was in the custom of asking his pupils to say the Lord's Prayer, and one boy would not say it, and he got very angry with him. Day after day this boy wouldn't budge. He punished him and still he wouldn't budge. In the end he called him into his study and said 'What is it, why cannot you say our Father?' He said 'Well Sir, it is like this, until I know I am his child, I dare not say our Father.' And the headmaster wisely understood and left the lad to his own feelings in the matter. Many years after he met this lad, when he was grown up. He was walking down the street, and he recognised him and he crossed the road, and he said 'I still remember what you said about using 'Our Father' it made me think whether I have the right to say it. But now I believe I have it as well.' A very interesting side-line to the beginning of this prayer.

Of course, we do not go through Mary, or any of the saints so called, there is only one way to God, no other name given among men, 'no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me'. And the Father loves to hear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ pleaded in prayer. It honours Him. He sent Him, He gave Him to be the ransom for sinners who are redeemed, He gave Him on behalf of sinners that there might be a way to God, and it honours God and it honours the Father when sinners come pleading the name of His dear Son. And it is something that we should be thankful, there is a name to plead. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. So, we have this relationship, and it is a Heavenly relationship because we read, He is in Heaven. Of course, as the omnipresent God, He is everywhere present, there is nowhere where God is not, He smiles in earth, He frowns in hell, and everywhere - there is nowhere in time or space (as men may call it) where God is not. Do remember that. When the Russians put a cosmonaut into space, Yuri Gagarin, he said, 'I cannot see God up here', he said that down from his space craft circling the earth. But when the Americans went up a little while later, they read Psalm 8, and it was quite impressive, at least one recognised that even beyond this earth all created works belong to our Creator. There is nowhere where God is not. It is a heavenly relationship. God is locally, I use that word carefully, there is a place where God dwells on his throne, there is a place where He is gathering His children

around to praise Him to all eternity, that place we call Heaven. It is that place where Paul had a glimpse of a third Heaven, he was given a glimpse within the celestial city gates, the glories that surround God's dear people there. And it is in that place, that Holy of holies that we approach our Father through His dear Son.

In pondering this I was reminded of the Covenanting times in Scotland, the killing times. And the dragoons were out one Sabbath morning looking for worshippers, trying to arrest them and take them to prison and even kill them, and they met a godly woman, and they suspected she was on her way to a Conventicle. And they said 'Where are you going?' She said, 'My Father has called me to a feast, I have been invited, and I am going to meet Him there.' They let her go, as they didn't understand what she was saying. She was talking about the Communion and the Lord's table. May we have the same relationship Father that dear woman did.

The next thing our Lord said, it is a hallowed relationship. There is one thing that we should guard young friends, and older ones to, it is the hallowing of the name of God. Sadly, most times we hear the name 'God' in our society it's by way of blasphemy, used so often so carelessly. The Lord commanded us: we are not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain. And you should remember, if you go to John 17, which I said is the true Lord's Prayer in that most deepest sense, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who had the right to be familiar with His Father, more than anyone else ever has been or will be, He addressed His Father. 'Holy Father', 'O righteous Father' He set the example of hallowing the name of His Father. Woe betide us if we lose the sense of hallowing the Lord's name. When we pray, we are professing to meet with a holy God. We should take off the shoes from our feet, the place where on we stand is holy ground. We should not rush into God's presence like the unthinking horse to battle. Remember who we are professing to commune with, whose voice we are hoping to hear. The Holy, holy, holy God. As we have it in the Psalms, God is greatly to be feared and had in reverence by all those around Him. And in Psalm 34: 'O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together'. And we magnify it when we hallow it. That word magnify needs a comment doesn't it? if we take a magnifying glass and look at something under it, I'm not increasing its size literally, it is only in my sight it is magnified. We cannot add anything to God, and yet dear friends, He is magnified when we put the magnifying glass of faith to His Word, then in our own eyes He becomes magnified. We cannot add anything to God, He is infinite, we are poor finite creatures. It pleases Him greatly when sinners do hallow His name.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about a kingdom. 'Thy kingdom come.' Of course, He was speaking to disciples around him, they were still waiting for an earthly kingdom. They were still hoping that this precious Person Jesus would be the King and rule over Israel, but they were looking for an earthly throne, an earthly kingdom. Again, and again the Lord says: 'My kingdom is not of this world'. What is it then? There are two places where God's kingdom is – on the one hand it is above, the dying thief recognised that, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom'. And the Lord Jesus Christ said that 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise'. With this kingdom, where the throne of God is, where God the Father sits, and the Holy Ghost too, and the dear Son of God at the right hand of the Father, clothed in a body like our own. That's the Kingdom of God that we desire to see with eyes face to face, 'Thine eyes shall see the king in His beauty'.

On the other hand, there is another place, the kingdom of God is within you. I wonder how many here this morning can honestly say that the kingdom of God is within you. If that is so, the Holy Ghost has erected the throne in your heart. He rules there. The other old nature doesn't change, it says 'we will not have this man to reign over us'. That is natural to us, our sinful nature reasons thus. But it is a great mercy if this kingdom is set up in your heart and in your life, and when men's hearts are turned to Christ, their life shows the evidence of it. If ever there is a generation where this needs to be prayed, 'Thy kingdom come' it is now. Nothing else can turn back the tide of anti-Christ, atheism, which is designed to deceive men on the way to hell. Only the kingdom of God can do it. People say, 'It is impossible, things have gone too far.' But we should never limit the Lord. Nothing is impossible. Had we lived in the days before Whitfield, we might have said the same, apparently it was not safe to go out on the streets, men were sunken in superstition and ignorance, it was a violent age. Whereas on the continent, in several of the continental countries there were violent revolutions. France for example, there was a violent revolution there. In England, by the mercy of God, there was not a violent revolution like that, there was an evangelical revolution. God sent His Holy Spirit, and men like Whitfield, and many others north and south of the border, and they were used by God to turn the nation into a different path altogether. We should never limit what the Lord can do. We should be praying more and more 'Thy kingdom come'. This is what is needed in our day. In one sense, I don't want to be controversial, this is the only nationalism we should be thinking of. I love my nation, and I love the land I was born in, I have no desire to emigrate (except perhaps north of the border) but not leaving the UK. But you know, really, we should look beyond those borders. 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'

Which brings us to our next point. The will of the Lord. 'Thy will be done.' Here we have the law of God set before us, the rule of God over His children. 'Thy will be done'. I think it was J K Popham said 'If you can say that from your heart, say it quickly, because it is quite likely you won't be able to say it in a few moments as you did just then.' It is a continual battle. We have strong wills of our own. 'The bondage of the will' - Martin Luther wrote this, man's will by nature is in bondage. People talk about free will but it's not free at all, it is only the freeness of gravity. That's the will of man. It is always downward, always against God. When a sinner is born again by the Spirit, there is another will that now becomes predominant on his life, the will of God. 'Thy will be done.' They learn: to rebel against that will is sin. Some of you may remember a minister called Reginald Honeysett, he was pastor at the Round Chapel at Cranbrook, a very interesting chapel to go and see. It was Huntingdonian before it became a Strict Baptist chapel. He related an incident in his early days as a school- boy, twelve or thirteen. There was a rule in his school that children should use the side door, the front door was for staff only. One day he was late for some reason, he thought 'If I sneak in the front door then I'll be alright'. But the headmaster saw him and took him into his study. Of course, punishment was far more severe then, than today. And he said 'Now Honeysett, before I punish you, Why am I punishing you?' and he said 'Because I came through the front door'. 'No, I'm punishing you for being a rebel.' And he relates, 'I had the first realisation of what the law really is, and what sin is, it is rebellion. And when we sin against the will of the Lord then we are rebelling, we are saying our will is better.' When we are in the spirit it is 'Thy will be done.' It is not easy, especially when you set your heart on something dear to the flesh. When the Lord says no are you willing to submit, and when He says yes are you willing to follow what His will is? In the book of Jeremiah, the king sent for Jeremiah and said: Tell me what the will of the Lord is? In essence

Jeremiah said 'You have got the Chaldeans on the doorstep. And the will of the Lord is, you submit to the Chaldeans'. It was chastening for the nation. And the king went away and said that he wouldn't do that, and for that he was greatly punished for it because he was dissembling. If some of you are praying to know what the will of the Lord is, through His word or through the ministry, through your conscience and you may have said 'Not this way, Lord'. You are ready to go on a different way altogether. But the way of obedience is the way to God's holy will. 'Thy will be done' If we dissemble at this point then we are bound to run into trouble and difficulties. The will of the Lord. 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'. How is it done in heaven you may say? Well, the angels do it perfectly, they do it obediently, they don't do it half-heartedly. Many years ago there was a Sunday school lesson and a godly teacher was teaching his children. He said, 'How do you think the will of God is done in Heaven?' Several children gave an answer and then one little boy said, 'They do it without asking any questions'. A very profound answer. We ask so many questions about the Lord's will don't we? They do it without asking any questions. It reminds me of a true story of a four-year old lad who strayed onto a train line. His father just saw him and heard a train coming down the line. He hadn't time to go and rescue him, he said 'lie down flat between the lines!' and the boy immediately lay flat, and the train went over him and he wasn't harmed. He hadn't got time to question, had he questioned it he would have been killed. May God give us such obedience to His holy will.

I think of Abraham in that respect, he asked no questions, when the Lord said 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac ... and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of', he rose early the next morning as soon as he could, took Isaac and we knew all what transpired. He didn't ask any questions. True, Isaac asked an understandable question, but God will provide Himself a lamb for the burnt offering. Just talking about the will of God, it has been said that an angel would be as willing to sweep a room for God's sake as well as to rule a kingdom. Whatever God's will is for us we should be content with that. Some people are always looking over the fence. 'Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Do the will of God before man, conscientiously.

I know in my early years at Chippenham, in the vicinity there was a godly man, deacon of another cause. He was very academic, a chemist. He had a lad who was not academic, he complained to me 'He just doesn't get on, he doesn't do as well in his exams as he ought to. I keep pushing him.' I said to him, 'You tell him to do whatever he does conscientiously, and he will go up'. He started off sweeping up in an electrical showroom, in three or four years he was managing it. He was conscientious. We do it as unto God. My late father in law, a very Godly man when he was changing his job, asked his employer for a reference. He wrote one line: 'You can trust this man with your life'. He saw the godliness, consistency, conscientious way he was living, and he saw that this was a man to be trusted. And why was it? It was because my father in law always did it as unto God. 'Thy will be done'.

They are the first three of the petitions. Then we come to the last ones, and those are to do with our needs before God. The first were to do with our relationship with God. First of all, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. We will look at it first of all, the way you might expect, God does provide for His children. Those who come to him asking for help in that respect, monetary needs, other needs, if you have a real need (mark my words, a real need) then God will provide it. It is a daily providing. We like things done, to have a huge stock which you can help yourself to as you need. Well in our

country we are very favoured, the shops, the shelves are laden. You go to other parts of the world and it is not like that. We should be very thankful what God has given this nation. We may have it taken from us for our sins; it would be a just judgment if He did. The point I want to make, as our daily need, so our Lord supplies. But sometimes it is literally day by day. Other than food, it may be in your work, you may need special wisdom for a particular day.

When I was a teacher in Coventry, I had a difficult class of 14-15 year olds, they didn't like maths, didn't like me, they didn't like Thursday afternoons. I used to dread it—I took them twice a week for an hour, Thursday afternoon and Tuesday morning. One Thursday afternoon they were so difficult, I thought I'm going to give up teaching. How I was going to cope with them on Tuesday? Well I went to the weeknight service, it was the pastor preaching {the late Peter Rowell}, from 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'. He knew nothing about what I worried about. He said, 'You're worrying about Tuesday already, see what happens when Tuesday comes'. I couldn't have a clearer word from the Lord than that. When I came to Tuesday with that class, they were like lambs, they did exactly what I told them, they did what they were told, they sat in their seats, they weren't noisy, they were obedient. The Lord had put His hand on them. And the miraculous thing, that continued for the school year. In that day the Lord gave it, I had to be patient until Tuesday, to get what Tuesday's needs were. The point I am making is, sufficiency for each day. You may be worried about Tuesday, I don't know. In that hour, in that day it shall be given thee. 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

I think of Elijah at Cherith. You know, the ravens only brought enough for one meal. The same with the widow woman of Zarephath, I don't think the barrel overflowed or the cruse of oil, there was always sufficient, always enough, sufficiency should be enough for us. Our poor covetous minds want more. More wants more. God's way is the way of dependence. Thomas Watson wrote 'in the lowest condition, what can he want who hath El-Shaddai, the all sufficient God for his portion? Though the nether springs fail, yet he hath the upper-springs: though the bill of fare grow short, yet an interest in God is a pillar of support to us, and we may, with David, 'encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.'

There are some relatives here, some descendants of the late Jabez Field of Blackboys. He was a man of great faith. He told me, the children told me many years ago, they were one day literally down to one crust, to be able to feed a family of eight or nine children. He sat down, gave the thanks, gave the Lord honour and glory even for that crust of bread. 'Now it's all we've got between us.' The Lord performed a mighty miracle. He cut one slice off this loaf, there was the same amount left, he cut enough slices for the family. You can hardly believe it. I spoke to one of his daughters, she said 'I was there when it happened'. God is a God of miracles. When we need a miracle, God will perform it. Every meal we have is a miracle. Remember that, that is why we should give thanks for our daily bread. It reminds me of the late Mr Woodcraft, a godly minister in Bedfordshire, a farmer, he got talking to man next door and asked him, 'Do you give thanks for your food?' 'Oh no, I don't need to do that.' Mr Woodcraft said 'You are like my pigs then; they don't give thanks'. We should never take for granted God's mercies, especially our daily bread and continual need of grace. God will keep us dependent.

Then the Lord went on, he said 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors'. Sins are debts. When we sin we become a debtor to law and justice. There is a payment to be made for sin. We sin

lightly; we forget there is a payment every time. Blessed be God, His family, the sinners convinced of their sin flee to Him, the debt has been cleared. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people ... Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem ... for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.' Apparently' the word double comes from a practise in Old Testament time. When a man had a bill, he couldn't pay he would nail it to the doorpost of his house so people could see it. If a man was going to pay the bill for him, he would take that piece of paper, fold it over, put the nail back through it, and go and pay the debt. 'For she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins'. Now the Lord Jesus Christ takes it one step further, if we are forgiven sinners (and God grant we may be because if not, eternal misery is our portion) we should be forgiving of others. An unforgiving person bares scant evidence that they are forgiven. If we really know what our debt is to God, and what great lengths God has gone to purge that debt by the giving of His Son and the shedding of His blood, surely the minute debts against us shouldn't even be a question should it, whether we are ready to forgive? Forgive our debtors. Many, stumble at this part of God's holy word. They come to dead halt. Can I really forgive that man who said that unkind thing? He that has caused that great havoc? We need God to give us a true spirit of forgiveness. And there is a time to show it. The prodigal father was ready to forgive his son when he returned. Within his heart, he kept that bond of forgiveness waiting for that moment of repentance. He kept back until he saw repentance, then he went and kissed him. Forgiving kisses, covered all the faults of that man, though he dealt so basely against his father he was ready to forgive. May we be as ready to forgive, as we are forgiven. The debt is cleared through sheer mercy.

One of the tribes of North America had a custom, when there was a quarrel between two tribes and they wanted to heal the division they would take a hatchet, and they would literally bury a hatchet. That term 'burying the hatchet' means leaving the quarrel, turning away from it and you're going to carry on as friends. It has been said that some people left a marker where the hatchet was, so they could get it out when they wanted to. Friends, don't leave a marker like that, if you forgive may it be done, and not your forgiveness repented of. Bury the hatchet, yes, but don't put a marker where it was. We are such fallen creatures, we are very quick to resurrect things at times, it may suit our flesh in an argument. True forgiveness is forgetting. When the Lord forgives, He forgets His people's sins in a judicial sense, He's covered them up, and we should be as ready to do that as possible. At the foot of the cross, of course, where we find such matters put right, when we come there, then we are ready to forgive.

Now, then our Lord went on— 'lead us not into temptation'. If you have been following the media recently you may know the Pope has taken upon himself to alter the Lord's prayer. He doesn't believe it should be saying this 'lead us not into temptation,'. He says it shouldn't say 'lead us not' because the Lord never leads any to temptation. Many of the recent translations, who don't translate from the original text, have amended it, taken the force of it out. Was the Pope right to amend it? No, he was not right. What does it mean? Lead us not into temptation. It is very true; God does not tempt a man to sin. God would never do that. He is too pure and holy. But He does permit our faith to be tested, and what the Lord is saying here, is lead us in such a path that where our faith is tested, that we do not fall, that we may be kept. 'Lead us not into temptation.' The late dear friend Mr Stehouwer, who was pastor in Grand Rapids, he used to say, 'if the opportunity be there, may the temptation not be there. If the temptation is there, may the opportunity not be there. But if temptation and opportunity come together, pray earnestly that the Lord may keep

you'. That's when you are most vulnerable. When the two come together, then you need that prayer. 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe'.

It is a wonderful mystery but a most blessed thought, our Lord Jesus Christ permitted Himself to pass through temptation. Let us be clear when we say that, there was never in His heart the least flicker towards any sin presented to him, there was not even a doubt, not even a pause in His holy person, He resisted fully completely every assault, continual assault. He has gained the victory. He can bring His people through times of great temptation and out of times of great trial in that respect.

Then it says: 'Deliver us from evil'. Augustine, the church father, said it would be right to put the two petitions together. I think it was right for him to say that. Deliver us from evil that we may not be led into temptation. Deliver us from evil. This implies everything that troubles God's children—their sins, Satan's temptations, the world, those difficulties that we have in life, the heavy cross. The Lord says here 'Deliver us from evil'. It does not mean that we won't have trials, in the world we shall have tribulation. But the Lord delivers in our troubles, before He delivers us out of them. Deliver us from evil. The Lord here implies when we do fall from sin there is delivering grace. Psalm 37 says 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD ... Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand'. Peter would never have come out of Satan's sieve but for that petition here, David would never have come out of Gath. 'Deliver us from evil'. How good God is to deliver His people, when they walk into trouble they have even been warned about. What a merciful God we have, He might discipline us, rightly so, but He will ultimately deliver all His dear people.

Then the doxology is added to this remarkable prayer, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.' This does not need any comment by me, let me read from Philippians chapter 2, let us read from verse 1 down to verse 11. 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Yes, the kingdom, power and glory is the Father's, and He has given it also to His dear Son, for ever and ever. We have it in Revelation, do we not: 'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' Blessed be God He does, may He reign in our hearts. If we can acknowledge this by God's grace, then from time to time we can rejoice in His Words. The perfect peace God gives His people. That perfect love which casts out fear, and when we are enabled, through the Spirit, to walk through this prayer, step by step, I believe that will be the outcome 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' We are rarely in that place, but it is a place that God sets before us to be sought after. Then the Lord Jesus Christ ends with a

word, 'Amen'. When He said it is of course a command, 'it shall be so'. When we say it, it is a prayer, 'may it be so'. May it be true of us, in our lives and in our hearts.

Reading through this prayer, how far can you get without stumbling, how far can I get? It's the Lord's pattern and prayer. May we be able to follow it through and may answers to prayer may be given.

I remember the late Fraser Madonald of Portree, preaching once and he said 'Friends, a sermon is as good as the good it does.' How true that is, but you know it's also true about prayer. A Prayer is as good as the answer it gets. How many of our prayers are good, I wonder?

May God add His blessing, Amen.