

The Framework of Prayer ▪ Matthew 6:9-15

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Intro: Word Magazine recently did an interview with Pastor Tim Keller—who pastored Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan for 28 years. The final question of the interview asked if Keller would do anything differently—he responded, “Absolutely, I would have prayed more. No question.”

(I think Billy Graham said essentially the same thing; he would have preached less and prayed more.)

We all can say the same thing as we look back on our lives—years, maybe decades and say “I should have prayed more”

- As we approach this text today, it’s *not* about praying more, or regret for not praying more, but praying *for the right things—aiming at the proper target in prayer*.
- We are looking today at the Framework—traditionally called *The Lord’s Prayer*.
- Someone suggested that it could more accurately be called “The Disciple’s Prayer”.

Now many people have turned this prayer into a mechanical tradition that has just been repeated without much thought or heart.

That’s the furthest thing from what Jesus intended.

The key word for grasping Jesus’s intent “in this way” —not just repeating these words, but with this framework in mind.

THE FRAMEWORK: God’s Fame & The Disciple’s Flourishing

- Now whether we realize it or not, we all have a framework when we pray. Even if your prayers are more spontaneous than structured—your framework is still built on what is *important to you*.
- And this brings us to a vital lesson in discipleship: What should drive us, is not what is important to us, but what’s important to the Lord Jesus.

In other words—when it comes to prayer, it's good to follow His Framework.

- The framework begins— “Our Father”.
- Now out of all the titles for God - Lord, Sovereign Lord of Hosts, Most High - Jesus chooses the simple “Father”.

It opens the prayer by helping us see God in his nearness and love.

**It helps us see up front what prayer is: not ritual, but personal.

- › By calling on God the Father, we see God who is *personal and approachable—it draws us in....*

Now when it comes to breaking this prayer down, it can either be 6 of 7 different petitions. The Reformed see 6; Lutheran Catholic's see 7. It doesn't matter.

Broadly, we can see two themes emerge:

God's glory & our good--*His fame and our flourishing.*

HIS FAME (v9&10)

The first petition of this prayer has nothing to do with us: Hallowed Be Your Name.

- Hallow is an archaic term that has stuck, mostly because generations have memorized the Lord's Prayer with it. It means to sanctify—regard as holy.

How does this look?

It's that God's people would know him and regard him as holy.

Includes:

-Adoring God's name in worship (heart)

-Protecting his name and honor in our conversation (words)

-Living faithfully so the name of Christ will not be dishonored (actions)

God's Kingdom

- There is a broad and narrow sense of this:

Broadly, it's a prayer that God's rule is more manifest in the world—that his glory fills the earth (Hab 2:14).

Narrowly, that God's Kingdom manifest in the church, grows stability and strength.

Practically it means:

- More people converted
- More believers conformed

Matthew 4:17 ESV

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

God's Will (on earth as it is in heaven)

- Heaven is the place of God's perfect will being done. There is no rebellion in heaven. It's a world of *perfect love*. There will be no besetting sins of anger, lust, revenge—no divorce, broken relationship, or unforgiveness.

We also know that God's will is "good, pleasing, and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

So praying God's will is far beyond discernment for a career path, or who to marry.

- › In a sense, it's praying that the path we walk *each day* is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Now it seems that elements of the Lord's Prayer may have influenced how Paul prays in Ephesians 3. It is interesting that you never see the prayers of the NT just reciting the Lord's prayer—but its themes are woven into the way prayers are recorded in the NT.

Ephesians 3:20–21 ESV

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- Note how God’s glory, his fame, is the bullseye.

(Calvin) “God’s majesty deserves to come before all other considerations.”

OUR FLOURISHING (V11-15)

- The emphasis begins to shift in v11.
- The fact that Jesus tells us to pray for things that lead to our good, our flourishing—means that he cares about our flourishing.

3 Essential needs:

Need of provision (v11)

Now the early church Fathers thought this had to refer either to the Word of God, or communion—but it seems best to think this is Jesus telling us we should pray for our physical needs (like food).

- To us, this may be strange. And with pantries and freezers stocked with food, we may forget to add this to our prayer

But we need to remember that for so much of history, and still much of the world....many of Jesus’ disciples have been and are dirt poor.

—We also think of those who voluntarily go without so they can give generously or go into ministry or missions.

This also applies/challenges our focus to live out our discipleship one day at a time, trusting the Lord’s provision.

- There may be an illusion to God providing manna (Ex 16).

A later lesson we will learn is not to borrow trouble from tomorrow--and it starts by how we pray for today.

And as some have mentioned...this is a prayer for our needs, not our greeds. (D.A. Carson)

1 Timothy 6:6–8 ESV

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Need of forgiveness (v12, 14-15)

- We can flourish physically with food on the table, but we will die spiritually if we don't have forgiveness.

First, note how sin is defined here: as a *debt*.

- This helps put our sin into its right perspective.
- And it makes sense: we owe God absolute love, obedience, and worship. When we fail at those, it's a massive withdrawal.

Gospel

Let's say you need to borrow \$5—it won't buy you much these days, but I lend it to you. I could easily forget that I ever loaned you that much.

But let's say you are really in a jam, and need a few thousand dollars, and a gracious family member or friend "loans" you the money.

But as life goes, you realize that there is point that you will never have the ability to pay it off.

That debt is *not forgotten*....but out of grace and kindness...*it can be forgiven*.

The debt we owe to God is massive. *Think in terms, not of thousands, but trillions*. (Current US national debt 23.3 trillion). No one at TRB could probably repay billions, let alone trillions.

Jesus is explicit that there is *a way, only one way* to find forgiveness.

Matthew 26:28 ESV

for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

So how do you plan to get out of debt? Not Incremental payments?

No, only by looking to Christ alone. By having your debt cleared by him.

Some here today may still be crushed by the debt you owe to God today—there is a way out, a way to be set free. Look to the Lord Jesus; Repent, Believe, Receive Forgiveness.

- It's clear that asking forgiveness is not a one and done deal.
- › Some suggest that the Lord's prayer is at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount (SOM)—and if that's true, then forgiveness is also at the heart
- Now we might think that v 14-15 are a separate teaching, but the word "for" shows that this is connected to the teaching on prayer.

It's a parenthesis to this petition.

Forgiven people forgive.

- The parable in Mt 18:23-35 show this.

The community of disciples must be a *forgiving community*.

Maybe it will help to think like this: The SOM is meant to shape us, and *prepare us for heaven*, for our *eternal future*.

In 1 million years, you will not be able to hold residence in God's Kingdom, and still be holding on to something that happened in 2022.

- › Our thinking should be: If I believe the gospel, and believe the blood of Jesus lifts the burden of the trillion dollars worth of my sin, *then I should want that for others.*

Forgiveness is always the way of freedom and flourishing.

Need of preservation (v13)

- The final petition is that God would preserve his people.
- Of all the petitions, this one is the most difficult; it can almost sound as if God tends to lead people into temptation.

—But we know that God does not. (Jas 1:13)

You may pray for traveling mercies for a long road trip or flight.

This last petition also falls under “traveling mercies” but in a different light than you might think.

—The journey is not on I-20, or I-77, but from this world to the next; from this age, to the age to come.

And not only are there dangers, and obstacles, and hazards...

There is “The Evil One”.

The idea is along the lines— “do not let us succumb to temptation in this journey of faith”.

You and I have a common spiritual enemy, who has one sole purpose: to bring you and I down. And down hard.

When I worked at UPS, I had a supervisor who would threaten his subordinates with this: “If I go down, I’m bringing you all down with me”

- › If you want to know what Satan is about, that's it.
 - › He been cast down from heaven...he get's no share....and he aims at bringing everyone down with him.
- Note how the Lord's prayer begins with looking to God our Father, but ends with looking out for the Enemy of our Souls.

Conclusion--

When it comes to the Lord's prayer, we notice how it begins with our focus on a providing heavenly Father, but ends reminding us of the reality of a pursuing enemy.

This is why we need to be a people who pray and pray well.

Finally, what we can appreciate most about this framework is its *simplicity*.

Jesus does not add unattainable rules and regulations to prayer that discourage.

We get a simple framework, that engages our hearts....and it comes from one who says:

Matthew 11:29 ESV

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.