

# **A 46 DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE WITH EMPHASIS ON PRAYER DURING LENT**



**STONY BROOK FELLOWSHIP  
2018**



## **LENT 2018**

### **DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL**

Dear friend,

Over the next 46 days, we will be considering “The Lord’s Prayer”.

In an endeavour to further our understanding of this prayer and how to apply it in our lives, we have compiled a number of daily devotions which you might like to use in conjunction with your existing devotional material. The devotions and the sermons during Lent follow the same theme so some of it may sound familiar, but I trust that as you are daily reminded about the issues that we have spoken of, you personally will be blessed and enriched in your own walk with the Lord.

The devotional follows the 46 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday So you will begin these devotionals on Wednesday, February 14.

God bless you as you join with me (and the disciples) as we say, “Lord teach us to pray”.  
(Matthew 5)

Pastor Earl



## Week One:

**Wednesday, February 14, 2018**

### *Does God Hear My Prayer?*

Not long ago I was driving late at night and decided I needed some caffeine and food to continue the journey. I pulled into a fast food restaurant, rolled down my window and began talking. After communicating every detail of my order, I waited...and waited. Maybe because it was so late that I didn't take the time to think through if anyone was listening, maybe since they left the drive thru light on I assumed someone was there, but after a few minutes I realized that I was talking, but no one was listening.

Maybe you haven't been there at the fast food drive thru, but most of us have been there in life and certainly all of us have been there in prayer: Talking, but feeling like God doesn't hear our prayers.

As we begin the devotional we want to do our best to answer the question, does God hear my prayer? To begin we must ask ourselves, "Have I trusted in the work of Jesus for my salvation?" The Bible is clear that our salvation comes from the work Christ did and not any good work we might do. In Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no man may boast." We are saved from our sins because of God's grace demonstrated through Christ and our faith in Him.

It is through faith that we please God, because our right standing before God comes through the work of Jesus. So where is the connection between faith and prayer? Let's go to Hebrews 11:6 and see if we can connect the two, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Do you see it? We draw near to God through prayer, and the prerequisite to drawing near is a belief that he exists.

Now let's clarify, this belief is more than a "big guy in the sky" or "man upstairs" kind of belief. It is a faith in the God of the Bible. A God who sent his only Son to live a life we could not live and die a death we should have died, so that we, through faith, in him might be able to have right standing before God. In Christ, all our sin, past, present, and future is forgiven.

So, before we jump into this prayer series we have to ask a few questions:

*-Have you admitted your need, because your sin has separated you from God?*

*-Have you asked God to help you turn from your sin?*

*-Have you trusted in Christ alone to rescue you?*

*-Have you asked him to forgive you of your sin?*

*-Have you declared your desire to follow Jesus, the King of your life, in faith from this day forward?*

### **Questions:**

- 1.) Do you believe God hears the prayers of those who haven't put their faith in Him?
- 2.) Has there ever been a time in your life where you felt God didn't hear your prayer? 6

## **Thursday, February 15, 2018**

### ***Does God Hear My Prayer?***

Once we have a relationship with Jesus, as we talked about yesterday, it positions us in a place that God will hear our prayers. Although, we must remember that scripture also teaches us that there can be things that hinder our prayer to God. Today I want to take a few moments to look at what those things.

### **Sin**

I know we are all going to sin, and I know that coming to God completely sinless is impossible, so what do I mean when I say sin can hinder our prayer. First, we need to spend time confessing our sin to God daily and specifically. We need to acknowledge our sin and in brokenness confess it to God. Second, we need to examine our lives for any consistent unchecked sin patterns. Are we engaging in repeated sin with no intention to change or submit to God in that area of our life?

There are couple of scriptures that help us understand this idea. First, Isaiah 59:1-2 which says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Another passage of scripture is found in Psalms 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."

When writing about this idea in his book *How to Pray*, R.A. Torrey wrote, "Anyone who finds his prayers ineffective should not conclude that the thing he asks of God is not according to His will, but should go alone with God with the psalmist's prayer, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me' (Psalm 139:23–24 KJV)."

### **Motive**

I won't spend a lot of time here because we will spend five days on this idea in a couple of weeks, but I wanted to mention it here. In James 4:3 we read, 'we ask, and we do not have because we ask with the wrong motive, that we might spend what we get on our pleasure.' Sure, there are numerous examples we could give here, and you might have a chance to write

out a few in a moment, but do you get the idea? God is not your personal Genie in a Bottle and we cannot pray that way. Again, we will dive into this idea later, but I felt it was important that we introduce it here.

### **Questions:**

- 1.) What does it mean to acknowledge our sin in “brokenness?”
- 2.) What other reason might you add to why prayer is unanswered?
- 3.) Can you think of a time when you prayed for something diligently, but with the wrong motive? 7

## **Friday, February 16, 2018**

### ***Finding a Closet***

*Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees. ~ Corrie Ten Boom*

Today's devotion is taken from a message by Adrian Rogers. I thought about adding a few things to the beginning or the end, but decided to leave it alone.

*What did Jesus mean when He said, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly?” (Matthew 6:6). The word “closet” simply means a place of isolation – somewhere you can shut the door on the world and open the windows to heaven.*

*As you study the life of Jesus, you find out that He sought to be alone. Sometimes He would climb a mountain. Sometimes He went into the wilderness. Sometimes He went into a garden. You see, it is the secret place that is the sacred place.*

*Now when I say the secret place, I don't mean a place that no one else knows about. I simply mean a place where you are alone with the Lord. Why is the Lord saying, “Enter into your closet to pray?”*

*Who you are when you are alone is really who you are. The mark of your prayer life is not really how well you pray in public, but in private. Your Father who sees you in secret will reward you openly.*

### **Questions:**

- 1.) Why is it so difficult to find a place of isolation to pray? How can you be intentional into adding this into your time with God?

2.) What does he mean when he says, “shut the door on the world and open the windows to heaven?” Is shutting the door on the world a difficult practice for you?

3.) Do you agree with the comment, “Who you are when you are alone is really who you are?”  
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## **Saturday, February 17, 2018**

### ***Nonstop Prayer***

Growing up in church it seemed that numerous times there was sugary incentive to memorizing scripture. If you memorized a verse you were rewarded with candy, gum, or some item that seemed all too rare to an 8-year-old boy. But there was always a disclaimer, “Jesus wept,” didn’t count. We had all located John 11:35 and overused to the point where we had to look somewhere else, that is when and how I discovered 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” There it was, my loophole on the way to a Willy Wonka Sunday surprise.

Long after the rewards have been eaten that verse has continued to benefit me. It has continued to challenge and shape my prayer life. What does it mean to pray continually and is that even possible? Does it mean I walk around in constant conversation? Does it mean that anyone who talks to me is interrupting my conversation with God? How can I maintain other relationships and still pray without ceasing?

We must shift our view of prayer from communication to communion. Sure, it involves communication, but it is more about communion with God than communication with God. Since communion with God isn’t something we think about often let’s try and break it down into 3 aspects of communion: (1.) intimate fellowship, (2.) constant awareness, and (3.) thinking about Him and having faith that He is thinking about you. Communion is the result of your relationship with God. It cannot be overstated, that as a follower of Jesus you are in a relationship, a relationship where communion and not just communication is possible.

### **Questions**

1.) What other verses have been influential in developing your prayer life? Now would be a good time to go to the back of your Bible and search the word prayer or look online at what the Bible says about prayer. Do any verses stand out to you?

2.) Do you think the three aspects of communion adequately explain the idea of communion with God? Which of those do you identify with the most? Are there any of those you struggle to identify with?

3.) Here is a quote from Oswald Chambers, what are your thoughts: *“The point of prayer is not to get answers from God, but to have perfect and complete oneness with Him. If we pray only because we want answers, we will become irritated and angry with God. We receive an answer*

*every time we pray, but it does not always come in the way we expect, and our spiritual irritation shows our refusal to identify ourselves truly with our Lord in prayer... When you seem to have no answer, there is always a reason – God uses these times to give you deep personal instruction, and it is not for anyone else but you.”*

## **Sunday, February 18, 2018**

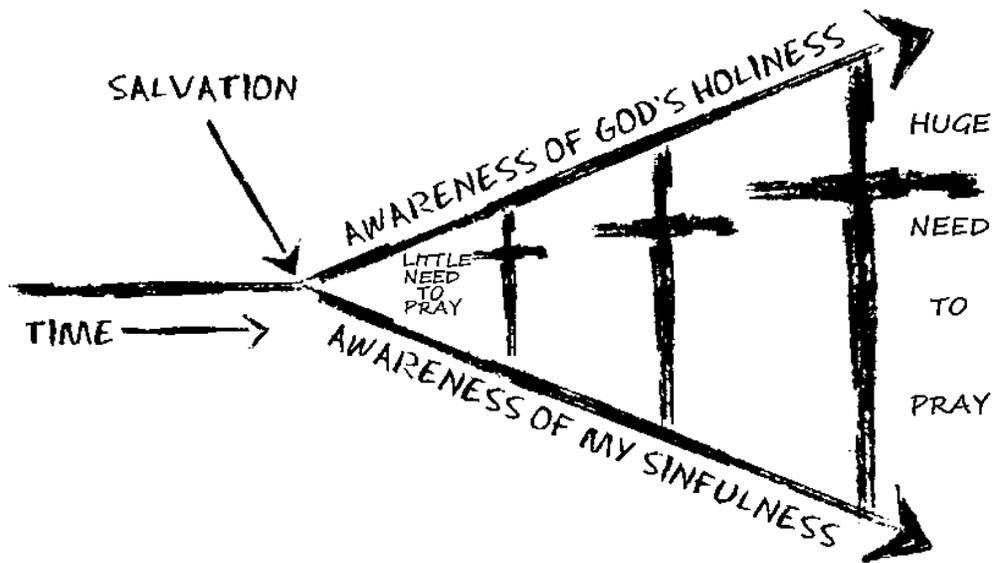
### ***Weakness Drives Us to Prayer***

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Do you ever wonder why mature Christians seem to pray more? I always used to assume it was because they have had longer to develop the discipline, or they had a better grasp on the “how-to” of prayer. While that may be a part of it, I believe the greatest reason mature followers of Jesus pray more is simply because they recognize their need for Christ. It has been said that the more you grow in faith the more you see your sin and the more you see your sin the more you see your need for Jesus.

The tendency might be to hide our sin from both God and ourselves, in a vain attempt to make us feel better, but what we must understand is that weakness is the channel that allows us to access grace. As a mature Christian you will see more and more of your sinful nature, but at the same time we see more and more of Jesus.

Here is a diagram that helps us see our need for Christ as we grow in him.



Questions:

- 1.) Who is someone that you have looked up to in the area of prayer?
- 2.) Have you seen the diagram true in your own life?
- 3.) Desperation leads us to prayer, what areas of your life are you most desperate to see God move?

## **Week Two: THE PATERNITY OF GOD**

Matt. 6: 9: “Our Father who art in heaven”

I would like to divide this statement into three sections, (we will consider one section each day).

### **MONDAY, February 19, 2018**

#### ***Our Father . . . . .***

The expression “Our Father” speaks of two things. On one hand it speaks of “Sonship” and on the other “brotherhood” (This week we will consider the ‘sonship’ aspect). Regarding ‘sonship’ it is tragic to see that many people consider themselves to automatically be sons/daughters of God based on the fact that they are His creation. This is not true. If it were true, the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus on this subject would have gone very differently.

Nicodemus was, by asking “how do I inherit eternal life”, asking how do I become a child of God (because only children receive the inheritance). Jesus was emphatic that to become a child of God a person has to be born twice – once physically and once spiritually. It is this spiritual birth that makes us children of God. It is this spiritual birth that entitles us to pray ‘Our Father’.

Have you noticed how often non-believers blame their unbelief on the fact that God has not answered their prayers. Their problem about their unanswered prayer is found in the fact that they are still only His ‘creation’ and not yet His ‘children’.

We must understand that there is only one prayer that God hears and answers from His creation and that is the prayer of repentance. In Luke 18 is the story of the Pharisee and Tax Collector in the temple. The Pharisee prayed, and God did not hear because his prayer came from a proud heart, while the tax collector's prayer made its way straight into the throne room of God – why? – simply because it was a prayer of repentance, a cry for mercy – “Lord forgive me for I am a sinner.”

This tax collector from that moment on was entitled to pray “Our Father” – why? – because no longer was he just part of God’s creation, but he was now a child of God.

Can I ask, have you prayed that prayer of repentance that entitles you to pray “Our Father”?

## TUESDAY, February 20, 2018

### Our Father . . . . .

One of the most beautiful thoughts regarding our sonship is the thought Paul gives where he says (Romans 8: 15) but you received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba Father".

It is because of our adoption into the family of God that all the resources of the Father become ours.

The adoption however is the key.

Imagine for a moment an unknown child walks into my office and says to me, I want your estate for my inheritance. I reply, I'm sorry but that's not possible. He says, why not? I say, because it is reserved for my children.

The child looks disappointed. 'But, I say, let me adopt you into my family then it's all yours'.

Why does it become his? Is it because he earned it? No! Is it because he's a nice kid? No! Could it be because I felt sorry for him? No! It's simply his because he's been adopted, his adoption seals the deal.

Just so with us. Our adoption into the family of God seals our right to the inheritance of God's blessing right now and ultimately in heaven itself. Max Lucado illustrates this wonderful concept in one of his stories: -

Two brothers arrived at school for their first day. The teacher, filling in the class register asked for their names. 'Robert', replied one. 'James', said the other. 'And your ages?' Both replied, 'six'. 'Date of Birth?' requested the teacher. Robert said '14 March'. James said '17 May'. 'You're not twins?' asked the teacher. 'No'. 'That is impossible, one of you has made a mistake' said the teacher, scribbling a note to their parents. Next morning the boys arrived with a reply from their father to say that the information they had given was quite correct. 'But how can that be?' asked the teacher. 'One of us is adopted', they replied. 'Which one?' 'I don't know' they both replied. The teacher sent another message to their dad asking which one was the natural son and which one the adopted son. The next day they told the teacher, 'Dad says he can't remember.'

Now there's a spiritual truth to ponder!!

How about you? Can you identify with the cry of Paul "Abba Father"? if you can, thank God for the reality of His love for you.

## **WEDNESDAY, February 21, 2018**

### **Our Father...**

I'd like to spend one more day focusing on our adoption into God's family. Adoption is a wonderful thing. I have had the privilege of witnessing from time to time, the emotion that goes with adoption. Where in the quest for a child the parents plan ultimately comes together and a child is introduced to his/her new parents. It's wonderful! And if anyone understands the wonder of God's adoptive plan, it's parents who have rescued an orphan from despair and taken a child who genetically is not theirs and given that child hope, security and a future.

These parents understand more fully what God has done for us because our adoption into God's family came too, after God sought us, found us, adopted us and as it were, signed the papers for us and took us home.

I don't know about you, but I can't help but ask, 'why did God do that?' Well, let me ask, 'why would anyone do that?'

Why would anybody give up financial freedom for added expense, sleepful nights for sleepless nights, freedom for extra responsibility. Why would anyone want to adopt a child?

Let me tell you why, for the same as God wants to adopt us.

Ephesians 1: 3-5 His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us, and He did this because He wanted to.

He adopted you knowing full well the trouble you would be and the price He would have to pay, and you know what – like any adoptive parent – He's happy about it.

How about you?

Have you found your place in God's adopted family? I hope so. If you have, thank Him for the privilege of being part of so great a family.

## **THURSDAY, February 22**

### ***Our Father who is . . .***

We move today to consider the second part of the statement . . . who is . . . We need to ask, 'who is what?' You see, God is many different things to many different people. There are as many different concepts of god as there are people.

For the Christian to be able to relate correctly to God, he needs to have a right concept of God. Jesus gives us the right concept. Jesus says God is 'Our Father'.

I feel reluctant to compare God to an earthly father because all too often when I tell a child that God is like a father, he looks somewhat disturbed as if to say, 'well if God is like my father, I don't want to have anything to do with him.' 'You see, my father is unfair, my father beats me for no reason, my father is selfish, my father doesn't provide for me, my father doesn't love my mother, so if God is like my father I want nothing to do with Him. I have enough trouble with my earthly father. I don't want another father like that.'

The Christian book shop has a book entitled, The Seven Characteristics of a Good Father – they are –

1. Commitment
2. Knowing your child
3. Consistency
4. Protection and provision
5. Loving their Mother
6. Active listening
7. Spiritual guidance

Today, there are not many fathers living up to those principals, but when we talk of God as being a Father, we must understand, He is the Perfect Father.

The most perfect example of this is found in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15).

This story could be better named, 'The Waiting Father'. You know the story – here it is in short. N.B. the focus of the story is the Father. He is on centre stage.

Scene One – son takes his inheritance and leaves for a distant town. The parting words of the father to his son could have been, 'son, no matter where you go, no matter what you do or what you become, I will always love you.'

Scene Two (a) – son looking dejected in a pig sty – (all his money is gone; his friends have rejected him, and he is hungry).

Scene Two (b) – the father at home is anxious. He paces the floor, he can't sleep, he constantly stares down the road in the hopes that his son will return.

Scene Three – the son comes to his senses and he remembers home. He decides to go home so he prepares a speech to give to his father – v.16 'Father I have sinned against heaven and against you, and am no worthier to be called your son – please take me on as a hired servant so that at least I will have something to eat.'

Scene Four – the father sees his son coming at a distance, he runs and embraces his son, he kissed his son. Most fathers would have rejected him, but this father was different – this father, Jesus said, is God.

How about you? How far can you identify with the prodigal son?

- 1) Have you left the Father? Yes/No
- 2) Have you seen the need to return? Yes/No
- 3) Have you returned? Yes/No
- 4) Did the Father welcome you? Yes/No

If you can say ‘yes’ to all these questions, take a moment to thank God for His paternal love.

## **FRIDAY, February 23, 2017**

### ***Our Father who is . . .***

We continue today talking about your concept of God as Father, (the perfect father).

In Luke, the Pharisees came to Jesus somewhat confused; they struggled with the concept of God as a loving Father.

They didn’t have a problem with God being the Creator; they named Him Elohim (the Creator). They used this name three times in Genesis one alone.

They didn’t have a problem with God as being the Provider, they named Him Jehovah Jireh. They remembered the way He had provided for them as their forefathers wandered in the desert. They also remembered God’s provision of a sacrifice for Abraham, (so that Isaac could be spared). Genesis Chapter 22.

They didn’t have a problem with God as being their Judge. They remembered well the day God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and all the Laws. They remembered well the consequences of disobedience to the law. God as Judge was familiar to them.

They didn’t even have a problem with seeing God as King. They prayed for the Messiah King who would deliver them from the Romans. God as a King was not a problem. They knew Him as all these things but did not know Him as Father until Jesus came and showed them (and us) this wonderful side of God’s nature.

Besides the parable of the Prodigal son, Jesus told two other parables to illustrate the caring and loving nature of God.

- 1) Luke 15: 8 – 10 The parable of the lost coin in which the searching housewife, who (likened to God) does not give up the search for the lost coin.

2) Luke 15: 1 – 7 The parable of the lost sheep in which God is likened to the Good Shepherd, who left the ninety-nine safe sheep to find, rescue and return the one that was lost. Jesus told these parables to reveal God as He is.

How about you? What is your concept of God? Do you know Him just as your creator, or just as provider, or even a judge, or do you know Him as Father?

## **SATURDAY, February 24, 2018**

### ***Our Father who art in Heaven***

We move on today to consider the last phase . . . . . in Heaven.

Firstly, let me say – ‘if Home is where the Father is and if the Father is in Heaven, then Heaven must be home.’

Question: If this is true, then what does this make us now?

Answer: Children away from home. (we are displaced kids).

Now the tragedy as I look at so many Christians lives (including my own), is that we have tried to make heaven on earth.

I am reminded of the song that goes – This world is not my home I’m just a passing through

My treasures are laid up Somewhere beyond the blue . . .

. . . .so, I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

Too many non-Christians, (some Christians) never become what God wants them to be because the pull of the world is too strong.

I love the Jungle Doctor story of the monkey who found a hive of honey and wouldn’t let any other animal near ‘his find’. A fire was spotted in the forest and the animals pounded through the forest to the hanging rocks to be safe. On the way there they passed the monkey with his honey. They pleaded with him to leave the honey as the fire was coming. Thinking they were trying to get him away from his honey to steal it, he refused to go. At hanging rock after the fire was gone, role call was taken. Everyone was present except for the one little monkey. You can guess where he was.

Can I ask why did he die in the fire? Was it because he didn’t hear the warning?

No. Or was it because he didn’t see the smoke? No. Or was it because he didn’t feel the heat?

No. Or was it because he didn’t believe the other animals? No.

Why did he die? – the pull of the honey was too strong!

Just like the pull for that monkey was so strong, so too is the pull of the world.

How about you?

Remember heaven is not here on earth. Remember Jesus' words – 'its far better to store up treasure in heaven where moths and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6: 20)

## **SUNDAY, February 25, 2018**

### ***Our Father who art in Heaven***

We move on to consider the second aspect of Heaven.

A few weeks back I saw on T.V. a documentary on Penguins in the North Pole. The film showed thousands of fluffy chicks all identical to look at. These chicks made an awful noise especially at feed times. It showed the mothers feeding their chicks; each chick being fed by its own mother.

How did those mothers know which chick to feed as they all looked the same?

The answer is that during all the noise and excitement, each mother recognized the cry of its own offspring.

God is so much like those mothers that during all the noise of the world, God recognizes the cry of His children. But, He does more than that. In the book of Revelation, John describes for us an amazing scene in Heaven. In the first eight chapters, he writes about the noise in heaven.

Angels singing 'worthy is the Lamb' Creatures crying out 'Holy, Holy, Holy' The souls of the martyrs crying 'how long' The 144 000 shouting, 'salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne' In addition, the thunder is thundering, the trumpets are blasting There are proclamations and declarations Wow! Heaven is a noisy place.

But then, something happens (Chapter 8: 1) suddenly there is silence in Heaven for half an hour. There is silence, total quiet. Its as if God raises His hand and says, 'Shhh, quiet everyone.' Then John describes an angel, coming onto centre stage; he's carrying a bowl of incense, the smell of the incense we are told is the prayers of the saints and it rises to God.

Picture it; the whole of Heaven is silent. Why? Because God is listening to the prayers of His children.

This is a Holy moment in Heaven, someone is praying, 'Our Father Who Art in Heaven.'

'What a thought!'

## **Week Three: God's Priority**

So far in Jesus' pattern for prayer, we have considered GOD'S PATERNITY. We come now to reflect on GOD'S PRIORITY for prayer as we look at the second phase.

### **"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"**

Bless me heavenly Father, forgive my erring ways;  
Give me strength to serve you, put purpose in my days.  
Give me understanding, enough to make me kind,  
So I may judge all people with my heart and not my mind.  
Teach me to be patient in everything I do  
Content to trust your wisdom and to follow you  
Help me when I falter, hear me when I pray  
So I may teach my children to love you more each day.

## **MONDAY, February 26, 2018**

### **Lev. 22: 32**

I will be hallowed among the children of Israel.

At the outset, I believe it is true to say that most people pray mainly in reference to their needs. For most people, prayer and needs go hand in hand.

There are many who treat prayer like a reserve parachute – i.e. – it's nice to have, but they hope they only have to use it in an emergency.

The Israelites, as they wandered in the desert (after leaving Egypt), are a good example of this.

They cried –

"Lord defend us from our enemies" (and God did).

"Lord we're hungry" (and God gave them food).

"Lord we're thirsty" (and God gave them water).

The only time they ever prayed anything was when they needed something!

Folks, we need to realise that prayer is far more than just petition. You see, prayer above all is COMMUNION. It is true to say that if we gained nothing else from prayer other than communion with God, prayer would still be the greatest dimension of the Christian life.

(Communion alone should be sufficient to make us want to pray.) I remember a man who in open times of prayer would always pray. He would stand to his feet and for 10 minutes would

declare God's glory. He spoke at length about God's majesty and power and grace. He affirmed at length the wonder and reality of God's love. By the end of his prayer you had a wonderful picture of what God was like, but I couldn't help but ask myself, 'when is he going to pray?' You see, I thought that in order to pray you had to ask God for something. Oh! how wrong I was! I now realise that when old Uncle George prayed, it must have been a holy moment in heaven as all were silent as he declared his praise for God.

As one person has said, "Prayer is to impress you with God much more than it is to impress God with you."

Think about that for a moment.

## **TUESDAY, February 27, 2018**

### **James 4: 7 – 10**

Submit yourself to God . . . wash your hands . . . purify your heart . . .humble yourself before the Lord.

Following on from yesterday, won't you notice that before we get to ask God for anything, we first declare our submission – v9 – to His Name, v10a – to His Kingdom, v10b – to His Will **NB** – only after we are in submission to Him can we then ask for Him to v11 – give us, v12 – forgive us, v13 – lead us.

There is a trend today to pray in a self seeking manner where we place our needs before His glory. We do this – when we – claim unmerited things from God when we – demand things from God when we think that we can bargain with God. (We say "you do this God and then I'll do that"). This kind of praying is nothing new.

***Jacob (in Genesis 28: 20 – 21) "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, if God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God".***

***He says, "God if you will do all these things for me then I will make you my God and I'll even give you 10% of my income". How's that for conditional praying?***

Compare Jacob's prayer with that of Elijah in 1 Kings 18, where the Glory of God was at stake as he (Elijah) competed with the prophets of Baal. The God that answered by fire would, it was agreed, be the one true God.

The prophets of Baal began. They thought the longer and louder they prayed the more Baal would be impressed and therefore the more likely he would be to answer.

Come evening time, Elijah steps forward, lifts his eyes to heaven and utters a simple (yet powerful) prayer, 'O God let it be known today that you are the God of Israel.' Or if I could paraphrase that prayer, Elijah would have prayed, 'Lord show your Glory' or simply, 'Hallowed be Thy Name'.

Ask yourself today, is 'God's Glory' pre-eminent in my prayer life?

## **WEDNESDAY, February 28, 2018**

### **Psalm 47: 8**

God reigns over the nations. He is seated on His holy throne.

We move on today to consider the word "Hallowed".

It's a word we have all said many times as we have prayed this prayer, but I wonder if we know what it really means.

Is it some official sort of statement like "God save the Queen"? Or is it a passing sign of respect? No, not at all. This phrase "Hallowed by Thy Name" is simply a human response to everything God is. It's not some religious cliché (we have plenty of those). It's not just a matter of reciting nice words about God. No – we're simply responding to who God is. Every time God reveals Himself, our response should be Hallowed be Thy Name.

Scripture is full of examples. Moses' response in Exod. 3 as God revealed Himself at the burning bush is interesting. For a moment Moses was speechless, but every action of his shouted out to God 'Hallowed by Thy Name'.

Isaiah's reaction to God's revelation of himself (Isa.6) was similar – he saw himself in the light of God's Holiness and Glory and every word echoed the phrase 'Hallowed be Thy Name'.

Another beautiful example is seen in the life of Job. If Job had a problem, it was that he talked too much. For 6 chapters after the debate over his alleged sinfulness (by his 3 comforters) Job gives his opinion on God. Each chapter begins with the words, "and Job continued . . . ". Then in Chapter 38, God answered Job – this is what He said:

*Job 38: 3 – 6*

*I will ask you questions and you must answer me. Where were you when I made the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off how big it should be? Surely you know!*

God bombards Job with question after question and God (this time) continues:

*Job 38: 16 – 26*

*Have you ever gone to where the sea begins or walked the valleys under the sea . . . ?  
Have you ever gone to the storehouse for snow or seen the storehouses for hail . . . ?  
Are you the one who gives the horse its strength . . . ? Is it through your wisdom  
that the eagle flies . . . ?*

Eventually, God stops – Job has got the message. Notice the change. Before God spoke Job couldn't speak enough. After he heard God, he couldn't speak at all.

*40: 4 – Job says – “I am not worthy, I cannot answer you anything, so I will put my hand over my mouth”. (in other words, “Hallowed by Thy Name”)*

Won't you take a moment, don't say a word, just contemplate the God of whom it is said, “Hallowed be Thy Name”.

## **THURSDAY, March 1, 2018**

### **Psalm 22: 3**

You are enthroned as the Holy One. You are the Praise of Israel.

Today we continue considering the word, “Hallowed”. The word in one sense simply means “Holy” (or sacred).

In order for us to have the right concept of God, it is vital that we grasp the extent of God's holiness.

King Belshazar in Daniel 5 found out the consequences of messing with the sacred. Here's his story in brief –

The Babylonians had taken the Israelites into captivity. The King ordered (in an act of arrogance) that the utensils from the Jewish temple be brought in to be used at a feast the King was hosting. Halfway through the feast, a large hand appeared on the wall and wrote 4 words, “Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin”.

In a panic, the King called all his wise men to interpret the writing. They were unable – eventually Daniel (a captive Israelite) was called. He took one look at the writing and said, “O boy King, you've really blown it this time” (my translation). God says to you that: 1) your days are numbered; 2) your deeds have been weighed in the balance and found wanting; 3) your Kingdom will be taken from you and given to the Medes and Persians.

That very night, Daniel's words were fulfilled. You ask, what is the message of this story? It's very simple; in colloquial terms – “don't mess with a Holy God.”

We find another example of this in Numbers 20. Here's the story –

The Israelites were thirsty, they moaned against Moses and God. God commanded Moses in the company of all the people, to speak to a rock and water would come

forth. Moses, however thought he knew better and he hit the rock twice with his stick. Notice that God didn't make the Israelites pay for Moses' disobedience – they got their water. But God spoke to Moses and said, (v.12) "because you did not honour me as Holy in the sight of Israel, you will not ring this community into the land."

You see, folks, Moses wanted to be the hero; he knew that if he just spoke to the rock and water came forth, then God would be the hero. Moses wanted to get in on the act and by doing what he did; he was stealing God's glory.

When God takes centre stage, there is no one who can stand with Him. When God receives His Glory, we are nowhere in sight.

The moral of the story is, "don't steal God's Glory". (even if your name is Moses)!

## **FRIDAY, March 2, 2018**

### **Isaiah 6: 3**

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of His Glory.

Over the next 3 days I would like to dwell upon the significance of the 'name' that is to be hallowed.

In order to understand the significance of 'the name' we must understand it as the Hebrews understood it.

To the Hebrew, the Name of God was a sacred thing.

They point to the 3rd commandment and say that the name of God is so Holy that the name itself cannot and must not be spoken. The name Yahweh / Adonai could not be uttered so they made up a word that they could say that would speak of God. So this is what they did – they took the consonants from Yahweh and the vowels from Adonai and came up with the word 'Jehovah'.

We think that that is an honourable thing to do, but God didn't think so. You see, for Him the tragedy was (and is) that although the name itself was so revered, the God whose name it was, was constantly being disobeyed, disbelieved, disregarded and ignored. The problem was that despite the reverence of their lips, their hearts were far from God.

Times have not changed much – even today there are so many who are willing to

pay lip service to the things of God, but their hearts are far from Him. Even in the Great Commandment, it says to love God with all our heart, mind and strength, (there's no mention of lips). Lip service leads to "empty religion". The Church of Laodicea (Rev. 3) fell into this category. In effect, God said, "you can have all religious activity in the world; you can sing the songs as beautifully as you like; you can say all the right words, but if the words are not said from the heart and the deeds not done for my glory, then you have missed the point. Your religion is empty!"

Take a moment and look into your own heart today – ask yourself

- 1) is my Christianity merely an issue of my intellect, or is it a reality of my heart?
- 2) is my Christianity more lip service, or is it real service?

## **SATURDAY, March 3, 2018**

### **1 Samuel 2: 2**

Hannah prayed . . . there is none Holy like the Lord, there is no one besides you.

In Ps. 9: 10 David says that those who know His name will put their trust in Him. What does David mean? By 'name' does he mean the letters that make up the name? No, of course not. He means the person behind the name.

We so often say, "so-'n-so" has a good name. By saying that, we're not saying the name itself is good, but the person to whom the name belongs is good. Michael Longmore's name means "angel" and does that make him an angel? – ask Jackie (she has to live with him!)

God, in the Old Testament, had many other names each depicting an aspect of His character; here are a few –

Elohim – Creator

El Elion – possessor of heaven and earth

Jehovah Jireh – the Lord our provider

Jehovah Nissi – the Lord our banner

Jehovah Rapha – the Lord who leads

Jehovah Shalom – the Lord our peace

Jehovah Raah – the Lord our shepherd and many more.

But the greatest name God ever took was "the Lord Jesus Christ" which means – "the Lord our Saviour and King".

David was right when he said, "when you know His name (or the God behind the

name), you will trust Him” because the God who stands behind His name is a God who will never fail to live up to His name.

Won't you take a moment to reflect on all that God's name says He is, then thank Him for as many attributes as you know our God to have.

## **SUNDAY, March 4, 2018**

### **2 Tim. 1: 9**

. . . the power of God . . . has saved us and called us to live a holy life.

In closing our devotion on the phrase “Hallowed be Thy Name” let me be very practical and ask how do we hallow His name?

**WE HALLOW HIS NAME WHEN WE LIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NATURE (OR ATTRIBUTES) OF GOD.**

We spoke a bit about this yesterday, but let me enlarge by saying that you do not have to use His name as a swear word to take His name in vain. You see, every time you make God less than He is you take His name in vain.

i.e.

When He says he will not fail you and you doubt Him, you take His name in vain.

When He says He will provide your needs and you disbelieve Him, you take His name in vain.

When He says He will protect you and you live in fear, you take His name in vain (the list is endless!)

You see, every time you don't live your life in accordance with His attributes, (as embodied in His name) you take His name in vain because He is everything that His name says He is and when you don't believe that, you break the 3rd commandment. Further to that, every time you make God what he is not, or think a thought of God that is not true, you take His name in vain.

The Israelites at Mt. Sinai are an example of this.

After Moses had been up the mountain for some time, the Israelites went to Aaron and said, “make us a God that we can worship.” The result of their request was the Golden Calf.

They now had a God no bigger than their imaginations and they trusted the calf to give them what only God was capable of giving. Don't we do the same sometimes? (These Golden Calves come in many shapes and sizes). Every time we make God something He is not, we take His name in vain.

Let me close by reiterating – we hallow His name when we live in accordance with the nature (or attributes) of God, as inferred by His name. (This is the life of Faith).

I have to ask myself, “am I living like that?”

**SEE YOU IN CHURCH!**

## Week Four: God's Programme

DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

MATTHEW 6:10

THE LORD'S PRAYER

So far in our study of Jesus' pattern for prayer we have covered: OUR FATHER – GOD'S PATERNITY and HALLOWED BE THY NAME - GOD'S PRIORITY.

This week we move on to consider the third statement: GOD'S PROGRAMME

"THY KINGDOM COME"

The subject of the "kingdom" contains such a wealth of truth that in attempting to deal with so great a subject, I feel like a child who has been given a bucket and told to empty the sea.

There is no way that we can empty this ocean of truth, but we will deal with three questions:

- 1) Whose is the kingdom?
- 2) What is the kingdom?
- 3) How does the kingdom come?

I trust that this will speak to you.

Pastor Earl

## **MONDAY, March 5, 2018**

### **Mark 6:11**

#### **Jesus said to His disciples, “the kingdom of heaven has been given to you”**

In chapters 5 and 6 of Matthew’s gospel we see Jesus in a confrontational mood. Jesus’ confrontation was against the empty and powerless religion of the day. In chapter 5 He confronts their faulty theology. In chapter 6 He says that their motives for fasting and giving were wrong and that their relationship to material things was wrong as well.

Also in chapter 6 He touches a sore point with regard to their methods and motives for prayer. He warns them against praying like the hypocrites (vs.5) who love to pray in order to impress men.

This background leads us to ask:

#### **Whose is the kingdom?**

Too many of us (myself included) treat prayer like a three act play:

Scene 1 - God is on centre stage (but not for long) as we declare a few ritualistic platitudes about Him (kind of like our kids when they try to butter us up – e.g. “Dad you’re the best dad in the world, we think you’re the greatest” – I am always suspicious when I hear that because I know what’s coming; its either a new hockey stick, skate board or a trip to the beach)

Scene 2 - We move God off centre stage and we climb on. We bring with us our shopping list (list like the kid’s mentioned above) and give God a run down on all the things that we think we need.

Scene 3 – We climb off centre stage and put God back on while we sit in the audience and watch to see how well God performs. When He doesn’t perform as well as we think He should, then we declare that God has not answered our prayer. This may sound a bit absurd but I think that if we were honest we would, in the main, find it to be true.

The problem, as I see it, is that our prayers tend to revolve around our own kingdom and not God’s. Our prayers are self-centred and directed towards building “my kingdom” and not His.

**Ask yourself today, “How kingdom orientated is my praying?”**

**TUESDAY, March 6, 2018**

**Rev. 5: 13**

**Every creature . . . sang, “to Him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever.”**

Yesterday we reminded ourselves of the necessity of praying with God’s kingdom in mind.

We ask again the question, **“whose is the kingdom”?**

Won’t you notice the first four phrases of the prayer:

Our Father . . . (who is our Father? – God)

Hallowed by thy name . . . (whose name is to be hallowed? – God’s)

Thy kingdom come . . . (whose kingdom? – God’s)

Thy will be done . . . (whose will? – God’s)

Folks, very clearly, in the first four statements of the prayer, we declare four times that it is God’s kingdom that we are concerned with.

It is a fact that every kingdom needs a king and that a king is not a king without a kingdom. The verse above tells us that Jesus is the king and because He is the king, His kingdom cannot do without Him.

If you take Christ out of His kingdom (i.e. the Church), all that you will be left with is a whole lot of rules and regulations, maybe a few nice feelings and some good music, but, on the whole, all that remains is an empty and powerless religion. BUT, put Christ in His rightful place on His throne at the centre of His kingdom and you now have the most powerful force in the universe.

This principle, more than any other, affects our prayer lives and very often changes not only the way we pray, but also the way we live.

As E.M. Bounds says, “the secret of success in God’s kingdom is kingdom-centred praying. The strongest one in Christ’s kingdom is the one who wields the power that comes from a Christ-centred life.”

**Ponder that thought for a moment.**

## WEDNESDAY, March 7, 2018

### Mark 14: 35 – 36

**Going a little farther, He (Jesus) fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.”**

So far we have established that a turning point comes in a believer’s life when he/she is able to pray – ‘Thy will be done.’

Have you noticed how this prayer goes against human nature? We have by nature a bent towards self that so often causes us to pray self-centredly. Like a baby who knows nothing about the community spirit, there is only one concern that is for self. A baby is born with the attitude – ‘I want it and I want it now.’ He doesn’t grow out of it either. You watch kids playing and you will notice that it is not long before they begin to verbalise this selfish attitude: ‘that’s mine’; ‘you can’t have it’; ‘if you don’t give it back to me, I’m not going to be your friend.’ etc.

Then they begin to play games and sing songs. One of the first songs that they learn is, ‘I’m the king of the castle and you’re the dirty rascal.’ Isn’t that the theme of many adult lives as well?

So when we (and we are all like this) are confronted with the “Thy kingdom come” principle, something within us rebels. When you sing, “Have Thine own way, Lord . . . You are the potter, I am the clay”, you bring yourself into direct confrontation with your own human nature.

Scripture is full of examples of people who could not, or would not, bow to the first principle of kingdom life, namely, “Thy will be done”.

Jonah is one example. He went to great lengths to try and ensure that his own will would be done and that the kingdom of his own life would be established. (You know the rest of the story).

The nation who built the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) had the same outlook on life. God commanded them to spread out over all the earth, but they thought they knew better so established for themselves their own kingdom. In acts of arrogance and self-gratification, they built a tower to symbolise their resistance to the kingdom of God. (You know the rest of that story as well).

I’ll let Paul give you the answer to your own selfish nature. He said, “I, (my old

selfish nature) **have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2: 20)**

**Can I ask – are you living the crucified life?**

## **THURSDAY, March 8, 2018**

### **Philippians 3: 8**

**I consider them (all things) rubbish that I might gain Christ.**

There is one thing that I have noticed about ‘kingdom people’ and that is that they have a very different value system compared to the selfish one inherent within us. Job is a good example of this. After undergoing a most severe test of his faith, (where he lost everything that the world considers valuable) we read that Job fell down and worshipped God.

In Chp.1 vs.1 he declared, “The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away – blessed be the name of the Lord.” Now that’s the response of a kingdom person. Job’s response to his loss was determined by his different value system. You see (as Selwyn Hughes put it), Job realised that even if you lose everything and still have God, you will find that God is enough.

Someone once asked John McArthur, “What happens if persecution comes and you lose everything. Will you be concerned?” “Of course,” he replied, “but not half as concerned as the person outside the kingdom because whatever they take, they can’t take the things that really matter. They cannot take away my love for God and His love for me. They cannot take away my love for my wife and kids. They cannot take away my love for you. They cannot take a thing that really matters. Why? Because the things that really matter belong to another kingdom.”

I’m reminded of the words of that song that goes “...He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose ...” Why can’t he lose it? Simply because it belongs to another kingdom.

**Consider for a moment your own value system. To which kingdom does it belong?**

**FRIDAY, March 9, 2018**

**Romans 5: 5**

**For the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit.**

We move on today to consider the second question: **“What is the kingdom?”**

At first mention of the word ‘kingdom’, my mind goes to King Arthur and his kingdom of castles and moats, heroes and villains, knights and fair maidens, laws and wars. But, is this the type of kingdom Jesus is referring to? No, not at all. Jesus’ kingdom is not a man-made institution or power.

History tells us that there have, in the past, been twenty-one great civilisations. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans, Greeks and many more have all established powerful man-made kingdoms.

Alexander the Great conquered half the known world of his time and was devastated when there were no more nations to conquer. Where, may I ask, is his kingdom now? It’s gone the way every human kingdom goes – it is no more.

Even the disciples fell into the trap of thinking that Jesus had come to establish that kind of kingdom. In the book of Mark, we see Jesus prophesying his own death three times. The disciples couldn’t (or wouldn’t) understand this. In their minds, they were probably saying, “Lord, you can’t die now you haven’t established your kingdom yet”. (i.e. you haven’t delivered us Israelites from the Romans).

Pontius Pilate thought the same. When questioning Jesus prior to His crucifixion, he asked the question, “Are you a king?” In his mind, he was probably saying, ‘What kind of king are you? You don’t look much like a king. Where is your castle? Where is your white horse? Where is your army?’ Jesus replied, “You don’t understand, Pilate. My kingdom is not of this world.”

Folks, if Jesus’ kingdom is not in this world, where, may I ask, is it?

I trust that you realise that the kingdom of God is (for now) in your heart.

**Do you remember the song we used to sing in Sunday school? –**

**There’s a flag flown high from the castle of my heart . . .**

**For the king is in residence there.**

**So let it fly in the sky, let the whole world know . . . that the king is in residence there.**

## **SATURDAY, March 10, 2018**

### **2 Corinthians 4: 6**

**For God . . . made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.**

The third question we need to address is – **How is the kingdom** (in our hearts) **established?**

This is the deeply practical part. **Firstly**, the kingdom is established in your heart through **conversion** and conversion begins with an invitation. God is forever issuing invitations. In Scripture, God invites Adam to marry Eve. He invites the animals into Noah's ark. He invites the Israelites to leave the bondage of Egypt. He invites the disciples to follow Him. He invites the woman caught in adultery to start a new life. So many invitations! But, the greatest invitation is simply that God invites you to be a citizen of His kingdom.

In Luke 14, Jesus told an urgent story of an invitation. He tells of a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. The invitations were sent out but nobody came. He sent another desperate invitation saying, 'the fatted calf has been killed, everything is ready. Please come to the feast.' Now the excuses began to come. One guy said he had just bought a field and must go and see it. The next said that he had just bought five yoke of oxen and needed to go and try them out. Another guy said that he had just got a wife and that she was a bit of a handful so he couldn't come. The king is furious and sends his servants to call the people from the highways and byways, streets, alleys, the poor, the lame and the blind.

Folks, please understand the tragedy here: most people didn't reject the king's invitation outright, they just didn't have the time nor see the need to give it any serious thought.

**Can I ask, have you responded to His "invitation"? If you haven't, you know what to do. If you have, then take some time to thank Him for inviting you.**

## **SUNDAY, March 11, 2018**

### **Matthew 10: 38**

**. . . and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

We said yesterday that the kingdom of God is established in your heart through conversion. Today, let me build on that by saying that the kingdom of God is established in your heart through commitment.

In Luke 14, Jesus addresses a crowd of half committed people. In order to test their commitment, He makes two statements:

v.25 – “If anyone comes after me and does not hate his father, mother, wife and children, brother and sister, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

That really got their attention, but the second statement was the clincher:

v.27 – “If you want to follow me, take up your cross and follow me.”

To the semi-committed, the cross was not a popular idea, but Jesus is not trying to be the popular option. We are told that after hearing this sermon, many stopped following Him.

You see for many (even today) the cost of commitment is too high.

Let me close by saying that although the cost of commitment is high and although the consequences of commitment can be frightening, you know what? **It's worth it!** Commitment that leads us to pray “Thy kingdom come” is always worth it.

Today, won't you recap on the lessons of this past week. (Let me help you).

1. Any form of “Christianity” without Christ is empty and is mere religion.
2. If Christ is king, that makes us servants.
3. When we realise that God's kingdom is the only really important kingdom, it changes the way that we pray and live.
4. Kingdom people have different value systems from those the world advocates.
5. The kingdom of God is a kingdom established in your heart.
6. The kingdom of God is established through conversion and commitment.
7. Commitment has a cost, but it is worth it (for the glory that is to come!).

See you in Church!

## Week Five: God's Plan

### DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL THE LORD'S PRAYER

So far in our study of the Lord's Prayer we have focused on –  
GOD'S PATERNITY . . . ( Our Father. . . )  
GOD'S PRIORITY . . . ( Hallowed be Thy name . . . )  
GOD'S PROGRAMME . . . ( Thy Kingdom come . . . ).

This week we will be looking at GOD'S PLAN as seen in the phrase –

**“ THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN “**

Matthew 6 : 10

Probably more than any other question asked of me is the question, “How do I know the will of God?” It is this question we will seek to address. I trust that over the next 14 days we will learn the art of “**letting God be God**” as we learn to live out “His will” in our daily lives.

God bless you in your endeavours.

Pastor Earl

## MONDAY, March 12, 2018

### James 5: 16

#### The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Let me say at the outset that:

I believe prayer makes a difference.

I believe prayer is effective.

I believe in the life-changing power of prayer.

Let me tell you a few reasons why. I have before me (in my Bible) a record of its effectiveness.

#### I read how:

Moses prayed and the Red Sea opened . . . He prayed again and it closed.

Elijah prayed and it stopped raining . . . He prayed again and it poured.

Hannah prayed and Samuel was born.

David prayed and Goliath fell.

Gideon prayed and with 300 men he wiped out the Midianite army.

Daniel prayed and the lions were muzzled.

Esther prayed and Israel was saved.

Jehosaphat prayed and his enemies were destroyed.

Ezra prayed and the people repented.

Elisha prayed and a child was raised from the dead.

Samson prayed and the pagan temple fell.

Jesus prayed and we were forgiven.

The believers prayed and Peter was released. The list goes on and on.

Scripture records for us (as does our own daily experience) the effectiveness of prayer.

James, in Ch. 5: 6, states so correctly that, ***the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*** When he wrote that verse, he had Elijah in mind (the incident in Kings 18 with the prophets of Baal and the culmination of 3½ years of drought) which proved the reality and the power of the God of Israel. You say – “Well, that was Elijah, He was a prophet.” James, anticipating that you would say that, says in v.17, ***“Elijah was a man just like us.”***

We ask ourselves – why was Elijah’s prayer so effective?

Firstly - - He was Righteous (i.e. right with God)

Secondly – He prayed in accordance with the will of God (i.e. God’s cause and his were the same.)

James wants us to conclude that when we, like Elijah, pray in agreement with God’s

will; we can expect God to answer.

**Won't you allow this thought to thrill your heart? Ask God to help you know His will when you pray.**

**TUESDAY, March 13, 2018**

**Psalm 10: 16**

**The Lord is King forever and ever.**

In considering the will of God we need to spend a day considering the **“Sovereignty of God”**.

Some people say, “Well, if God is sovereign, why bother to pray. His will, will be done anyway. He knows the beginning from the end and everything in between. Our fate is sealed.” There are others who come from another angle and say that if prayer is commanded by God, is God really sovereign. We are faced here with one of the challenging paradoxes of Scripture.

Now I believe there is an answer to this question, but I don't know what it is. All I know is that Scripture tells me that the mind of God and His ways are infinitely beyond my own understanding. The more I know about God the more I realise there is so much more to know. The more I understand about God the more I realise that there is an enormous gap between the best of human thinking and God as He really is. As Selwyn Hughes puts it, “there is God as we conceive Him to be and there is God as He is.” All too often these two concepts are poles apart.

For us to understand God's ways is like an amoeba trying to understand the theory of evolution and the mind of a scientist, or like an earthworm trying to understand the workings of a bulldozer. It's impossible – just so with us.

Oh, I believe in the sovereignty of God all right, but I also understand the command to pray. The best I can do is to say that the sovereignty of God and God's command to pray, run on parallel tracks. You and I are the 'sleepers' in between.

**We must therefore, be careful that we don't allow our lack of theological understanding to destroy our prayer lives.**

## WEDNESDAY, March 14, 2018

### Psalm 40: 8

**I delight to do your will, O my God.**

So far, we have seen that answered prayer hinges upon the statement **“Thy will be done.”**

I have noticed that the phrase, “Thy will be done” can be said in four ways, each way depicting an “attitude type”.

Thy will be done can be said with the attitude of **bitter resentment**. It is said in this manner by someone who believes that he cannot escape from the inevitable and is mad about it.

This attitude is founded in having a wrong concept of God. They see God as a bully, someone who lords it over them and makes unrealistic demands on them. It is the attitude that subconsciously says, “I’ll do what he wants me to do because He’s bigger than me, but boy, do I resent it!”

Jonah is a typical example of this attitude type and he lived a life of bitter resentment to the will of God. He was told by God to go and preach in Nineveh. He resented being told what to do so he headed off for Tarshish. God wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer and sent the storm and the fish. Eventually, still with the attitude of bitter resentment and through clenched teeth, Jonah preaches at Nineveh and to his horror, the Ninevites respond and repent. Jonah was furious when God, according to him, did not live up to His promise to destroy the Ninevites and Jonah sits outside the city with his bad attitude and sulks.

There are many people like that today whose greatest battle is not with sin, not even with self, but whose greatest battle is with God.

Those of you who watch cricket on TV will have seen the duck that makes its way across the screen waving its fist in the direction of the umpire. He too has the attitude of bitter resentment.

Can I ask, has maybe a loved one been taken from you, maybe a business venture has failed; maybe a dream has been shattered? Could it be that you too, like Jonah and the duck, growl with bitter resentment through clenched teeth – “Thy will be done”?

**Think about it.**

## THURSDAY, March 15, 2018

Many people pray “Thy will be done” with an attitude of **passive resignation**. This is the person who prays with the “Que sera sera, whatever will be will be” attitude.

A poet by the name of Omar Khyam had this attitude where he visualised God as a chequer player, (we are the chequers) who move the pieces as he wills. When he finishes the game he folds the board and puts it all back in the cupboard ready to play another day. The chequers passively resign to the will of the player and they can do nothing to influence their own destiny.

In Acts 12, we have the account of the believers praying for the release of Peter who was in prison. As they were praying, an angel released Peter from prison and he made his way to the prayer meeting. While they were still praying, Peter knocked on the door. Rhoda was sent to see who was there. She ran back excitedly to report that Peter was at the door. Someone suggested that maybe it was his angel, but no one believed Rhoda’s report.

Those praying were praying with an attitude of **passive resignation** where they didn’t really believe that their prayers could/would make any difference.

So many times when we pray, we tag “Thy will be done” onto the end of the prayer just to soften the blow when the prayer is unanswered.

Folks, I firmly believe that the primary reason our prayer lives are so weak is that when we pray we don’t really believe that our prayers are going to make any difference, or do any good anyway.

**N.B. The kind of prayer that prays “Thy will be done” in passive resignation, is a prayer that will seldom get God’s attention.**

## FRIDAY, March 16, 2018

Psalm 91: 1

**He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.**

So far, we have seen how “Thy will be done” can be prayed in an attitude of:-

- 1) bitter resentment**
- 2) passive resignation**

Let me say today that it can also be prayed with an attitude of **3) positive relaxation.**

In short, this is the prayer prayed in faith with the outcome being left in God's hands. The interesting thing about this prayer is that the words prayed are the same words said in the prayer of passive resignation, **but the attitude is very different.**

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, as they faced the fiery furnace, (Daniel 3) were able to pray "Thy will be done" in an attitude of **positive relaxation** knowing that their prayer would be heard, but knowing too that they could leave the outcome to a God who would always do what was best – listen to what they said in

***Daniel 3: 16 – 18 "O Nebuchadnezar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods . . ."***

Another example is found in the attitude of Esther after she had been told of Haman's plans to wipe out Israel. She was faced with the daunting prospect of entering the Kings' presence uninvited. She knew what she had to do, she spent three days praying and then made that challenging statement, ***"I will go to the King, even though it is against the law and if I perish, I perish."*** (Esther 4: 16) Some would say those prayers are prayers of passive resignation, but they aren't, they are prayers prayed with the attitude of positive relaxation.

**Won't you turn to Psalm 91 and take a moment to read and contemplate God's promise to those who "dwell in the shelter of the Most High".**

## **SATURDAY, March 17, 2018**

**Psalm 18: 28 – 29**

**You O Lord keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.**

Fourthly, might I suggest that the prayer "Thy will be done" is a prayer of **active rebellion.**

The fact that we pray "Thy will be done" on earth infers that God's will is not always being done. Sadly, we have been lead to believe that everything that happens is God's will. It's not!

It's not God's will that wars should be fought.

It's not God's will that crime should be rife.  
It's not God's will that people should die of aids.  
It's not God's will that souls should perish and go to hell.

You see folks, God's will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven. You know why? – because there is another kingdom seeking to prevail. (Jesus called this kingdom the 'kingdom of darkness') and it is against this kingdom that we are called to pray. The prayer, "Thy will be done" is a prayer of **active rebellion** against the world in its fallen-ness.

The world will tell us these things that happen are normal. We must just accept them. The world tells us it's normal for marriages to break up – we pray in rebellion to that. The world tells us it's normal for sin to prevail – we pray in rebellion to that. The world says it's normal to belittle the ways of God – we pray in rebellion to that. The spirit of our prayers should be the spirit of active rebellion against the norms and standards of a world whose norms and standards have been set by the kingdom of darkness.

People often ask – Why did they crucify Jesus? – did He do something wrong? – did He lie or steal? – did he murder anyone? 'No' He did none of these things, then why did they crucify Him? They crucified Him because He was a rebel. He rebelled against the false religion of the day. It was this rebellious attitude that put Jesus on the cross. He actively rebelled against the worldly standards. They crucified Him because He rebelled against what they considered to be acceptable and normal. Jesus never accepted the status quo. He didn't passively resign to the prevailing norms. He lived and prayed in **active rebellion** towards the kingdom of darkness.

**For a moment, consider your own prayer life – is your praying typified by the attitude of 'passive resignation', or are you praying in 'active rebellion' against the kingdom of darkness?**

## **SUNDAY, March 18, 2018**

**Galatians 2: 20a**

**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**

So far, we have said that "Thy will be done" can be prayed with the attitudes of –

- 1) bitter resentment**
- 2) passive resignation**
- 3) positive relaxation**
- 4) active rebellion.**

Let me say today that in Matthew 6: 5 we are given the standard for God's will. The phrase "as it is in heaven" sets for us this standard. We ask how is the will of God done in heaven? A study of the angels in heaven will give us a guideline.

1. God's will is done unwaveringly – there is never a need for discussion, there are no angelic trade unions and nobody's input is required.
2. God's will is done completely – no half-hearted jobs and nothing is done in half measures.
3. God's will is done sincerely – all the angels wait with bated breath for the next command.
4. God's will is done willingly – no argument.
5. God's will is done fervently – with a whole heart.
6. God's will is done swiftly.
7. God's will is done constantly.

**BUT** Isaiah 14 tells us that this has not always been the case. Verse 13 tells us that one day Lucifer rose up and said:

**"I will** ascend to Heaven

**I will** raise up my throne above the throne of God

**I will** sit enthroned on the Mount of Assembly

**I will** ascend above the clouds

**I will** make myself like God."

So, from there being one will in heaven, there are now two. (Heaven was not big enough for two wills, so one was removed.) As I look at the earth today, I realise that there are now more than four billion wills (we each have one) and of them, only one is Righteous. You know whose that is!

Folks, the bottom line is this – the greatest hindrance to God's will being done in your life is your own will, therefore, until your will is dead, (i.e. comes under the control of God) God's will cannot be done.

**Think about that for a minute.**

## **Week Six: God's Provision**

DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

Matthew 6

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

So far in Jesus' pattern for prayer we have considered –

Our Father – i.e. GOD'S PATERNITY

Hallowed be Thy name – i.e. GOD'S PRIORITY

Thy Kingdom come – i.e. GOD'S PROGRAMME

Thy will be done – i.e. GOD'S PLAN.

This week we consider - **Give us this day our daily bread** – i.e. GOD'S PROVISION.

I trust that this amazing verse will encourage you and broaden your experience and understanding of God's practical interest in our lives.

We will be looking at this statement under 6 headings -

1. An Introduction
2. The Substance
3. The Source
4. The Supplication
5. The Seeker
6. The Schedule

Hope this blesses you

Pastor Earl

## **MONDAY, March 19, 2018**

### **Matthew 6: 13**

. . . Give us this day our daily bread. . . .

1. It might be helpful to begin with a general overview of where this request fits into the Lord 's Prayer. The prayer begins with three statements about God, all relating to God's glory, God's kingdom and God's will.

The next three statements relate to man - i.e.

give us bread,  
give us forgiveness, and  
give us deliverance

Each of these requests relate to a period of time -

1. bread relates to the present
2. forgiveness relates to the past
3. temptation relates to the future

All three areas above relate to the three basic needs of humanity;

1. bread – our physical needs
2. forgiveness – our mental and psychological needs
3. temptation – our spiritual needs

**In three profound statements all the needs of human life are covered!**

How profound is it that the issues of our Christian life are not just 'heaven' or 'hell' issues, but relate to the simple needs of man as well.

I find it amazing to think that a God so great would be concerned about what would appear to be the trivial needs of humanity.

I guess this is what makes God so awesome!! (Won't you spend a few moments trying to comprehend the magnitude of these thoughts?)

## **TUESDAY, March 20, 2018**

### **Deut. 2: 7**

For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hand: he knows your walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord your God has been with you: you have lacked nothing.

## **2. The Substance**

To many of us this prayer of asking God for bread may sound irrelevant. As I look around the world in which I live, I cannot help but notice that most of us have plenty of bread.

When last did you pray, 'Lord I'm hungry, Lord I need a meal'? Some of us should pray, 'Lord help me not to eat another meal, I have eaten so much already.' We question the relevance of this prayer because we think that the need for bread would be more applicable coming from someone who lives in Ethiopia or India or possibly some poorer area of our country or community. For most of us this prayer would appear to be irrelevant because we have plenty of bread.

What therefore is this text saying, (do we just save this part up for some rainy day or a time when we may need it?) **NO!**

We need to understand the context of this statement within the Lord's Prayer as it comes at a point in the prayer where we realise that there is really only one reason to pray anything, and that reason is that God may be glorified.

**This request therefore must fall within the bounds of God's glory.**

We must understand that even when we make requests of God; it glorifies Him because simply by asking, we are declaring our dependence upon Him.

The term 'bread' is a general term and covers all our human physical needs. The verse above is part of a sermon that Moses preached to the Israelites that suggests that all the physical needs of the Israelites (believers) are covered. In Deut. 2 Moses makes an observation, as he says to the Israelites, for 40 years in the wilderness have you not noticed that you have the same shoes and clothing that you left Egypt with? i.e. pointing to a supernatural act of God to make a little go a long way and perishable things to last a long time.

Jesus continually had the physical needs of people on His mind; when He fed the 5000 He showed His compassion toward those who were hungry and in need of a meal and He gave to them their 'daily bread'.

Again, today won't you unashamedly declare your dependence upon God to God recognising Him as your great provider?

## WEDNESDAY, March 21, 2018

### Matthew 6: 13

. . . . give us this day our daily bread . . . .

Continuing on the '**substance**' of bread, please note that it is bread that God promises to provide and not caviar! It is however, wonderful to see how God occasionally throws in something special.

The children of Israel in Exodus 16 grumbled because all they had was bread and so God provided them with a bonus of quail. It didn't however, please God that they had grumbled, but they got quail anyway.

The bottom line is simply that **God has not promised to give you all that you want**, but certainly all that you need – the problem is that we struggle to know which is which. Our battle sometimes is knowing the difference between wants and needs. I guess it's because advertising has done much to cause us confusion. Advertising would suggest that some of our "wants" are in fact our needs and this has led to much confusion. The Hebrew prophet speaks some wise words when he says in Isaiah 55 "why do you spend money on that which is not bread and labour for that which does not satisfy?"

I sometimes wonder how Jesus would handle the pressure of materialism. Would he live like a Franciscan monk, or choose the lifestyle of an upper-class larney? The answer would probably be neither – Jesus fully recognised the danger and the pull of things. In Matthew 13 He told the parable of the sower and the seed and how that some of the seed fell amongst thorns and got strangled because of the cares and desires of the world.

Jesus however also had no problem with wealth that was honestly made, but warned of the distractions that an overemphasis on this can bring in ones spiritual journey. Jesus contrasted man made efforts to look after oneself with the birds and the flowers when he said, 'why do you worry; would God not provide for all of these and if He provides for the birds and the flowers will He also not provide for you as well.' These thoughts should not lead us into lethargy or laziness, but must surely bring with them great thoughts of hope and peace.

Maybe today the issues of this world and the desire for more have stolen your peace – won't you be reassured of God's love for you and His commitment to supply your 'daily bread'.

**THURSDAY, March 22, 2018**

### **3. The Source**

One of the first songs we are taught when we go to Sunday school is the song “all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful **THE LORD GOD MADE THEM ALL.**”

How profoundly true and accurate this song is!

When we consider the intricacies of nature and the complexities of creation, how amazing to think that because of God’s passion for diversity, life has so many flavours of meaning.

Many Christians of long standing can testify, not just of God’s provision of bread, but of God’s provision of many different flavours of bread. Every aspect of life is included in God’s promise of provision and as God has such diversity in creation, so too there is so much diversity in His ability to provide for us.

One of the temptations in life is the temptation to declare oneself a self made man or woman. The world makes heroes of these people as they think that they are the source of this apparent blessing. Jesus warned us as He told the story of a self made man who built barns, filled them with food, sat back and ate, drank and was merry, thinking foolishly that he was the source of his blessing until one day the angel visited him and took his life and declared this man to be a fool.

I cannot help but notice that human nature seems to lead us to the point where those that have more appear to be less grateful than those who have less. Gratitude should be the attitude that all believers carry with them, recognising that Jesus is the source of all our blessing. I think of the 10 lepers in Luke 17 who were healed by Jesus and only one of them returned to give thanks to God for all that He had done. How sad that 10 were blessed and only one returned.

In Psalm 23 we have David declaring God’s goodness when he said ‘my cup runneth over’. If you want to know how to handle God’s blessing, one thing you don’t want to do is hoard it. Some people would seek to get a bigger cup to hold God’s blessing, but David, because he knew who the source of his blessing was, let his cup overflow into possibly the cups of many other people. What a beautiful picture on how to handle God’s blessing. When your cup overflows, allow it to flow into the cups of those around you.

Just contemplate, as I close, the fact that you don’t possess anything that He didn’t provide.

## **FRIDAY, March 23, 2018**

### **4. The Supplication**

The first thing we must note with regard to the supplication is that it is perfectly legitimate to bring to God our smallest requests. God never tires of hearing us asking for daily bread. The inferral from Jesus is that this is a daily thing. God's ability to provide in whatever area of life is quite clearly seen in Scripture. Elisha said Lord give me a double portion of your spirit and he got it. Samson asked God for strength in his greatest moment of need and he got it. The blind man at the gate asked for sight and he got it. The lame man at the pool asked for the ability to walk and he got it. The woman at the well asked for living water and she got it. Every one who asked received.

This right to receive is based upon three things -

1. Relationship –i.e. is He your father because Him being your father makes the request legitimate.
2. Righteousness – James tells us that the prayer of a righteous man avails much. Note that righteousness does not mean behavioural perfection, but infers the covering of our sin by the righteous blood of Christ. (Without righteousness there can be no relationship.)
3. God's reputation – God has a reputation to uphold, that when He makes a promise He will keep it. King David, at the end of his life, is looking back over his life and he says, Psalm 37 vs. 25 "I was young and now I am old yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread." God's reputation goes before him and what He promises He will deliver.

Joshua, like David in Jos 23: 14, expresses a similar sentiment, "now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises that the Lord your God has given you has failed, every promise has been fulfilled and not one has failed."

How cool to know that our God does not play silly games with us; He does not make promises He will not or cannot keep. His reputation is completely intact. Go into today and carry that thought with you.

## **SATURDAY, March 24, 2018**

### **5. The Seeker**

So far we have covered the substance i.e. bread;  
the source i.e. God;

the supplication i.e. a legitimate request.

Let us consider now the SEEKER.

It is vitally important that you notice who is making this request. **Give US our daily bread.** Please note once again the corporate nature of this prayer.

One of the greatest things about being a Christian is that it brings us into a family situation. This situation has a deeply practical application.

When we look at how God supplies for us, we notice that there are a number of ways in which He does it.

1. In Genesis 3: 9 we see He supplies our needs through the sweat of our brow. Many of us would rather wait and hope that God will send a raven as He did with Elijah, but that is not God's plan. God provides for us by the fact that we are to work. In fact, God has no time for laziness.

In 1 Timothy 5: 8 Paul says, if a man does not work to provide for his family he is worse than an infidel.

In 2 Thessalonians 3: 10 Paul says, if a man doesn't work he should not eat. Which leads us to the question, what about those who cannot work? The Bible teaches in this regard that those who can work are to help those in the family who cannot. You see God doesn't always use the raven or angels to provide for the family, mostly he uses you.

One of the most glorious stages of the Church would have to be the first entry church where in the book of Acts we see a great picture of the family of God providing for the family of God. Jesus himself on the mountain where He fed the 5000 did not call down bread from heaven, but He told his disciples, you go and feed these people.

In my experience I have often spoken to people and when asked how they are doing they declare that they have been blessed. My next question is often to ask – why do you think you have been blessed. If you think you have been blessed because you think you are better than somebody else, then you are probably wrong, **the reason you have been blessed is so that you can be a blessing.**

I trust that as you contemplate God's blessing on your life and enjoy it, that you will remember the above statement.

Go out there and be a blessing!

## SUNDAY, March 25, 2018

### 6. The Schedule

Today we consider the **schedule** of God's provision for bread.

Notice that this is a daily occurrence. In Exodus 16, God promises to Moses and the people of Israel – Manna. This manna from heaven will come on a daily basis. Once again we see how God despises hoarders and those that did hoard found that all it led to was bitter bread and worms.

God's lesson to the children of Israel was daily trusting Him for the provision of their needs. This is a test of faith. It doesn't mean that we don't plan or save; it just means that we need to learn to live with contentment with that which we have, in the knowledge that God is able to meet the needs as they arise out of tomorrow. God never wants us to be preoccupied with the physical. He says that He will take care of you so that you can take care of the spiritual. I guess in a way he is suggesting that you spent time looking into the higher levels of righteousness and he will take care of the lower levels of the physical.

As we conclude in our contemplation of "give us this day our daily bread" might I just recap with you the substance is bread –this covers every area of our physical needs

2. The source is God – our faithful provider

3. The supplication is give – our legitimate cry

4. The seeker is 'us' – remember our family responsibility to one another that God may use you to provide daily bread for someone else.

5. The schedule is 'today' – declaring our daily dependence on him.

Remember as I close, the basis for praying this prayer is founded in a relationship between yourself and God and allows you to legitimately call Him your Father.

I trust that as you continue in our journey through this prayer that God will; in a way that only He can do, encourage you in your spiritual journey.

God bless

See you in Church!

## Week Seven: God's Pardon

### DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

#### The Lord's Prayer

Jesus' pattern for prayer has focused so far on:-

GOD'S PATERNITY – Our Father . . . .

GOD'S PRIORITY – Hallowed be Thy Name

GOD'S PROGRAMME – Thy Kingdom come

GOD'S PLAN - Thy will be done

GOD'S PROVISION - Give us . . . our daily bread.

This week we will be contemplating

GOD'S PARDON as seen in the phrase –

“FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE  
FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS  
AGAINST US” (Matthew 6: 12)

Pastor Earl

## MONDAY, March 26, 2018

### Romans 3: 24

We are justified freely by His grace.

Last week we covered the fact that God has promised to take responsibility for the physical needs of His children. We ended off by saying that God doesn't want us to be preoccupied with the 'physical' (that's His responsibility), but wants us to be absorbed in the 'spiritual'. The first step in the realm of the spiritual is the step of Forgiveness. (Let's talk about that).

It is true to say that (in the physical realm) our needs are related to our stage in life (i.e. every stage has a need.) Let me illustrate –

When I was a baby my greatest need was for food.

As a 10 year old my greatest need was for discipline

As a 16 year old my greatest need was to get rid of my pimples

At 18 my greatest need was for common sense

At 22 my greatest need was for a wife, etc.

But, in the realm of the spiritual, the situation is quite different. You see, it doesn't matter at what physical stage you are, your greatest spiritual need is for forgiveness.

Counselling offices are full of people manifesting all sorts of physical and psychological problems stemming from the subconscious cry for forgiveness (to be given and received).

This subconscious cry ties in so well with the fact that Scripture tells us that to receive forgiveness is the foundation of spiritual reality (1 John 1: 9) and to give forgiveness is the foundation of emotional stability (Matthew 9: 2)

Without a doubt, forgiveness is the greatest need of the human heart.

As MacArthur says –

The most essential

The most blessed

The most difficult thing God ever did was to provide man with the forgiveness of sin.

It is the most essential because it keeps us from eternal Hell.

It is the most blessed because it restores our fellowship with God.

It is the most difficult because it cost the Son of God His life.

*Won't you, as you pray today, acknowledge your own personal need for forgiveness, then thank God that He gives it freely. (All we have to do is receive it).*

*p.s. Have a good day!*

## **TUESDAY, March 27, 2018**

### **Romans 3: 23**

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Today, won't you notice that a study on forgiveness requires that we spend some time talking about sin?

Romans 3: 10 tells us there is none righteous (not even one), we have all fallen into and are under the power (stronghold) of sin.

Joshua in Ch. 7 v 13 refers to sin as “that accursed thing” because he knows that

- it is sin that disturbs and corrupts every human relationship
- it is sin that is the culprit in every argument and broken home
- it is sin that is to blame for every anguish and every death.

Sin is the ‘common denominator’ in every human distress; BUT, not only does sin bring heartache between ‘men’, it is sin that separates us from God and therefore is man’s greatest enemy.

I find it interesting that in Scripture, there are four words used when referring to sin. I believe they will help our understanding (We'll deal with two today).

1) HARMATIA – this simply means to miss the mark. (like an archer shooting at a target). In this case, he misses not because of inaccuracy, but because his arrow keeps falling far short. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot reach the mark.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ time are a good example of this – they knew the law, they knew the legal requirements of God, but they were plagued with the human dilemma of our inability to reach God’s standards. As Romans 3: 23 puts it, we all have (and continually do) fall short of the Glory of God.

2) The second word used to refer to sin is the word PARABASIS – this

refers to stepping across the line (going beyond the limits prescribed by God). It's like the 'keep off the grass' or 'wet paint' sign – who can resist just stepping across the line, or touching the forbidden? There is something in our human nature that cannot resist 'crossing the line'. If you're looking for an example, King David is one. In his affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) he crossed the line of God's moral law. Nathan the prophet, who was sent by God to get David back on track, was right. David could have chosen just about any girl in the Kingdom, but he chose the 'forbidden' (and boy! did he pay for it.)

*We'll look at the other two words tomorrow, but for today, won't you get a picture of our own inability to meet God's standards; then thank Him that He doesn't lower the standard, but meets the requirements on our behalf.*

## **WEDNESDAY, March 28, 2018**

### **Colossians 2: 13**

He forgave us all our sins . . . He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

The third word used to describe sin is ANOMIA – this is a strong term and speaks of blatant lawlessness, i.e. a flagrant act of rebellion; the willful breaking of God's laws.

Scripture is full of examples –

The Israelites as they worship the Golden Calf (Exodus 32) went flagrantly against the will and way of God.

Jonah, knowing full well the word and will of God, went deliberately in the opposite direction.

The man who sins in the 'anomia' sense is the man who says, "God has no claim on my life, I choose to go my own way and live my life the way I see fit."

The fourth word used is the word OPHEILEMA and this is the word Jesus uses in the prayer. It speaks of sin being a debt, i.e. when you violate God's holiness and sin, you acquire a debt.

In the book of Revelation (Chapter 20), John describes the final judgment – he says (v12) . . . and the books were opened . . . and the

dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

These books are the books of account – the account of debt incurred by the unjustified.

Isn't it quite a thought that we as sinners owe to God a debt – we can never pay (we are spiritually bankrupt).

BUT, in Colossians 2: 13, Paul speaks of this record of our debt. This is what he says:-

When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code with its regulations, that was against us and He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

In those days when a criminal was crucified, his crime was written and nailed to the top of his cross. What Paul is saying is that this is what Jesus did for us. He took the record of our sins (our debt) and had it nailed to His cross and then declared – “Paid in Full”.

*Contemplate that for a moment! (if you can).*

## **THURSDAY, March 29, 2018**

### **Isaiah 53: 6**

He has taken the iniquity of us all and laid it on Him (Jesus)

The verse above highlights for us the wonderful fact of God's Judicial Forgiveness.

Let's spend today looking at this.

Judicial forgiveness views God as the ultimate judge of the Universe. God in His greatness looks down upon us, sees our sin and says, “You've broken the law, you have failed to reach the mark, you've stepped across the line, - you're guilty.”

We cannot help but acknowledge that He is right. We realize there is no way we can reach Him, so we bow in repentance before Him, acknowledge our debt and our spiritually bankrupt state and God (the Judge) says –

“On the basis of Christ’s death and your confession (repentance) I declare you to be not guilty. He (Jesus) bore your punishment, took your guilt and paid the debt you owe.”  
That folks is judicial forgiveness. It is through this judicial forgiveness that all our sins (past, present and future) have been eternally forgiven. Jesus told a parable to illustrate this judicial forgiveness. It is the story of a king who called all who owed him money to pay up. A man was brought before him who fell down in front of the king and declared himself bankrupt and unable to pay. The man pleaded for mercy and his plea was heard, he was released (the story continues, but we’ll finish it tomorrow), but notice so far that the onus was upon the king to forgive. The king took the initiative – just so with God. God seeing our inability to reach the mark took the initiative to save us.

This fact highlights to us the greatness of God’s Grace.

Charles Spurgeon once said –  
“I believe that as often as I transgress, God is more ready to forgive me than I am ready to offend.”

If it comes to a pitched battle between sin and grace, you will never be as bad as God is good. (You can only sin as a man, but God can forgive as a God – you sin as a finite creature, but God forgives us as the infinite creator.)

## **FRIDAY, March 30, 2018**

### **Matthew 10: 8**

“Freely you have received, freely give”.

The parable Jesus told (that we started yesterday) did not however end very happily. We continue the story – the man who had received forgiveness from the king went out from the presence of the king and bumped into someone who owed him a fraction of what he had owed the king. He grabbed the man and threatened him with all sorts of things if the man did not pay up. One of the king’s servants happened however to see this incident and overheard the conversation. He reported back to the king that the man who had been forgiven of a huge debt could not (or would not) forgive a small one. The king was furious and probably said, “How inconsistent is it that I should forgive you so much and yet you cannot forgive so little”, and he had the man thrown

into prison.

You see, what Jesus was trying to say was that forgiveness comes in 2 dimensions (vertical and horizontal).

The vertical dimension is the judicial forgiveness that we receive at the hand of God and the horizontal is the forgiveness we need to have for those who wrong us.

Let me say too that the second (horizontal) is to prove the first (vertical). If you have received of God's forgiveness (vertical) and are not giving others (horizontal), I wonder if you have truly received of God in the first place. Oh, I know someone is going to say –  
"You don't understand, you have no idea how badly I have been wronged, you don't know what he/she has done to me, you don't know the hurt and the heartache I have suffered."

My reply is simple, "I don't care" (not because I'm being unsympathetic) but because I have to agree with Jesus. You see I cannot help but compare the hurt that you have experienced at that person's hand with the hurt that He (Jesus) has experienced at your hand and say that this hurt far exceeds yours. (You see you really only have a case when your hurt exceeds His).

*Forgive me for my directness, but won't you today contemplate the chorus of the song "Freely we have received, freely therefore give".*

## **SATURDAY, March 31, 2018**

### **Matthew 7: 3**

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye.

One thing I have noticed amongst Christians is that we have a 'scale' for sin.

The scale runs from acceptable sins (white lies, etc.) on the one side to unacceptable sins (murder, etc.) on the other and we love to judge fellow Christians and put them somewhere on the scale. (Have you noticed how other people are generally put higher up the scale than they deserve, while we put ourselves lower than we probably deserve?)

But, if the truth be known, the sin we see in others is very often the sin we have ourselves.

We say, “Oh he has the sin of pride” – the only reason that bothers you is probably because you battle with pride. We say, “Oh he’s so two faced” (I wonder how many faces we have). Let me illustrate further – Over in America a community put together a petition against reckless driving. That night the Police set a watch. By the end of the evening, 5 violators had been caught – here’s the punch-line – all 5 violators had signed the petition.

Tony Campolo was once speaking at a Church after a number of TV Evangelists had gone off the rails and the fellow introducing him referring to these men said, “We must distance ourselves from such men lest the world think the Church is made up of people like this”. Campolo couldn’t resist it when he stood to speak, he said, “I hate to break it to you, but the Church **IS** made up of people like this, the only difference between them and us is that the world hasn’t caught up with the rest of us yet.”

Folks, if the truth were known about us, I think we’d all be pretty embarrassed. But the truth of the Gospel is that God is able to use you in spite of yourself. When I read the Bible I can’t help but notice the incredible variety of people God uses – from Rahab (a harlot) right through to Ester (a Queen).

Folks, before we can allow this ministry of Grace (on the horizontal level) to happen, we need to lose the ‘scale’ of sin and begin to see people through God’s eyes.

## **SUNDAY, April 1, 2018**

### **Isaiah 43: 25**

I, even I am He who blots out your transgressions . . . and remembers your sins no more.

Today (and next week) I would like to address the question, “**How do we forgive?**”

In order to answer this question, we need an example from which to work.

Jesus quite obviously is the greatest example we could want. I trust that as we look at how He forgave, we will be challenged to do the same.

The first thing I want you to notice about Jesus' forgiveness is that **when Jesus (God) forgives, He forgets.**

I heard a lovely story recently that illustrates this –  
A cynical reporter one day came to a person noted for her godliness and said cynically –  
“Is it true that God speaks to you?” “Oh yes”, was the godly person's reply. “Then,” said the cynic, “I want to put you to the test”. Here's the test, “I went to confession yesterday and I confessed three sins to God. If you hear from God I want you to go and ask Him what the three sins were.” To that the godly person said, “Give me a moment and I'll ask Him.” A few minutes later the godly person returned. “Well,” said the cynic, “did you hear from God?” “Oh yes,” said the godly person. “Well what did God say,” said the cynic, to which the godly person replied, “God says He's forgotten.”

Folks, therein lies a wonderful theological truth.  
*Won't you take a moment today to reflect with Isaiah upon the mercy and grace of God when He says -*  
I, even I am He who blots out your transgressions . . .  
and remembers your sins no more.