

"The Lords Prayer"



Video of sermon avl here: <https://youtu.be/Nxf2HGP-vAU>

Matthew 6:7-15

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,^[a]
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Audio Transcription:

Dr. Stewart

So last week, we finished with Ephesians, and talked about prayer. And we're going to continue that topic today with the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:7-15. You know, I was raised in a Catholic Church and when I was a little kid, I remember going with my mom to confession. There were these three booths that are made of wood that are attached to one another. There's a center one with a door, it's for the priest, and two on either side that are for people who would come in and confess to the priest, there's a curtain over the door. And of course, they're connected and not exactly soundproof. And, you know,

we were in the church. So usually most of the conversations that went on in the confessional were kind of in a whispered quiet voice. The priest would open the window between his booth and mine so I could hear what he said, and he could hear what I said. But there's like a veil, so you can't really see a face. Before confession, we usually sat in a pew for a few minutes, you know, waiting our turn and also thinking about what's about to happen, I'm going to confess sins. So what sin am I going to confess? You know, I was just a kid, I want to confess something, he's going to be suspicious if I saying nothing. But I don't want it to be too bad. Right? It couldn't be stealing, or killing or anything like that. It would be something like a lie or taking the Lord's name in vain. That was always a popular one. So I went into the booth, and behind the curtain a door comes open. I'd say, Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, it's been three days, or it's been three months, or three years since my last confession. After I confess the priests would give me penance prayers to say, to show that I was repented. Three Our Fathers and six Hail Marys, let's say. And so I would thank him and go out and go to the pew. And I'm going to say this prayer. And I would say it really fast. You know, (saying as fast as he can without stopping to breath) Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven and give us today our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and power and the glory Amen. (big breath) Because you've got to get it done, you want to get out of there. I mean, as a kid, that was the point, to hurry up and get it over so you could leave.

The Lord's Prayer for me, and for most people, a lot of people, is kind of white noise, right? Something you say but without much thought or sincerity. Tim Keller says this, The Lord's Prayer may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other words in the history of the world. Yet, it's an untapped resource and for many it's become white noise. Imagine you're visiting a friend in their home near the train tracks. And you're sitting there in a conversation when suddenly the train comes roaring by just a few feet from where you're at. And you jump up to your feet in alarm and say, What's that?! And your friend, the owner of the house responds, What was what? And you answer, I thought something was coming through the wall! Oh, that, your friend says, that's just the train. I guess I'm just used to it. I don't notice it anymore. And with wide eyes, you say, I don't see how that's possible. But it is and it's the same with the Lord's Prayer.

The whole world is starving for spiritually experience. And Jesus gave us the secret, in a few words. Wouldn't you like to be able to come face to face with the Father and the King of the universe every day, to pour out your heart to him, to sense him listening to you and loving you. We say yes, count me in on that. It's all there in the Lord's Prayer. Let's read it a little slower than I did the last time. Matthew 6:7-15, "And when you pray, don't heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, or our sins, as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their

trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

So I want this to be interactive somewhat. I'm going to ask you questions as I go along. And they're not all rhetorical questions. So I would hope that you'll respond to me, okay? Verse 7, "And when you pray, don't heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do". He says here, "for they think that they will be heard for their many words". In both Christian churches and in the pagan world, there are those who think that being heard is saying a lot of words. And I may have had that thought as I was doing my penance prayer, as I mentioned earlier. But there's plenty of other people in the church that are like that. And we saw the Pharisees in Jesus day, the long prayers they prayed because they wanted people's attention. But for me, as I was praying when I was a kid, my heart just wasn't in it. And other examples from the Old Testament, 1 Kings 18, there's the prophets of Baal and they're appealing to God. Elijah is there and they are having a contest over which sacrifice God gonna honor. And so the prophets of Baal say words, over and over and over and over, for hours, and they're cutting themselves before their god, thinking at some point, he's going to respond if we were sincere enough. And what happened? Nothing happened. And Elijah, it's like two verses, a few sentences, he prays a few sentences. And what happens? There's fire from heaven, it consumes the sacrifice immediately, even the water in the trench. God wasn't impressed with a lot of words.

Verse eight says, "Do not be like them". But you can't make this an absolute rule, can you? Because there's a few times in the Bible like when Jesus is out there praying all night. You think he prayed a lot of words? I think he probably prayed a lot of words all night to God. And we see where it talks about vain repetition, saying something over and over and over again. But we see Jesus in the garden, he repeated himself three times, Let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but your will. He prays this three times, saying virtually the same thing. Isn't that's repetition? That's probably the most godly prayer that's ever been prayed. Even though it was repeated, it was from the heart. He was engaged with God, his Father. Verse eight says, "for your Father knows what you need before you ask him". That's a comfort. Sometimes we don't exactly know how to pray, do we? But he knows our heart. He knows what we need. He knows even times when we pray badly, and ask for things that aren't going to help us but will hurt us. We come, thinking we know what we need, but we don't. And he does. So Jesus says, pray like this. So this prayer in Matthew is a template. It's like a model prayer that we can learn from, and some people will take it that way. Pastor's wife told a story recently where somebody was preaching and they said, You know, if you take this passage any other way than that, you're wrong. It's only meant to be a model prayer. Well, when you read in Luke, Jesus disciples come to him and they ask him, in a little different setting, Lord, teach us to pray. And he prays this prayer. So I don't think you can go wrong praying this prayer, as long as you're doing it sincerely, before God, with understanding. So there's both. It's a model, and it's a prayer you can sink your teeth into from the heart. You won't learn to say it as fast as you can, hopefully. We're going to take some time with it this morning. And we'll take this prayer apart to try and gain some insight into it.

The Lord's Prayer has six petitions. There's three that are directed to God in verses 9 and 10. And there's three that are our needs, which are verses 11, 12 and 13. The first is about honoring God, giving him glory. The last are about things that we need, food, all our provisions, forgiveness, protection, deliverance. MacArthur says this, and MacArthur speaks a lot of words too. I've got a shelf full of John MacArthur's words. But sometimes they're really, really good. And this is a really, really good part. He says, Prayer should incorporate certain elements, such as adoration, praise, thanksgiving, a sense of awe at God's holiness, the desire to obey his commands, confession of sin, concern for others, perseverance and humility. He says in this section of Scripture, in the Lord's Prayer, in fewer than 70 words, we find a masterpiece of the infinite mind of God, who alone could compress every conceivable element of true prayer into such a brief and simple form, a form that even a child can understand, but the most mature believer cannot fully comprehend.

In verse nine, the prayer starts with the word, Our. I thought, in the past as I prayed this prayer, it was more of a personal prayer, me to God. But it starts with the word Our. So what does Our mean? The body of believers, it's a community, a community of believers. What about Jesus? Are we with him on this? Right, because we've been brought into his family. His Father has become our family. Our Father, right? We had a different father before and this is a new one, he's made us sons and daughters. And he lives inside of us by His Spirit in order to glorify the Father. So then the phrase Our Father, what does that mean, that God is our Father? Okay, there's one part, we were not his children but then he adopted us. He sacrificed himself for us to make us his children, because we were enemies before and we had sin. That was kind of a problem. And he's your dad and authority figure that is over you. So he created us, saved us, adopted us, he protects us and he keeps us. MacArthur says this, speaking about Jews and their view of God, Faithful and godly Jews had always believed God is the Father...in heaven of those who placed their trust in him. Jesus use the title Father in all of his prayers but one. Jesus prays to the Father except once. Do you know what the one is? It was on the cross, he said, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Because he was separated from the Father at that point. Matthew 27:46 is emphasizing the separation he experienced in bearing our sin. He had his fellowship cut off from the Father, while the sky was dark, and he was being judged. God as our Heavenly Father, first of all means the end of fear, the fear that pagan religions invariably had for their deities. But ours is not that way. If an earthly father will spare no effort to help and protect his children, and the Bible tells us that Matthew 7:11 and John 10:29, if earthly fathers are going to protect their kids, then certainly God's going to protect us. Knowing God as our Father settles the matter of loneliness too. If we've ever been rejected by our family, friends, fellow believers or the rest of the world, we know that our heavenly Father will never leave or forsake us. He's with us. God is eager to lend us an ear. It's an amazing thing isn't it? God wants to listen to you. He wants to hear you pray to Him.

Calvin says this, Let us have no doubt that God is willing to receive us graciously, that he is ready to listen to our prayers. Martin Lloyd Jones says, He is our Father, if we only realize that we're indeed his children, and whatever we pray, it is like a child going to his father, he knows all about us, he knows our needs and what we're going to pray even before we pray it. As a father cares for the child and looks at the child and is concerned

about the child and anticipates the needs of the child. So it is with God in respect to all those who are in Christ Jesus. We must remember that he is our Father, the great, the Holy and Almighty God, is our Father. He cares deeply for us. He has counted the very hairs of our head. He said that nothing can happen apart from him. Finally, we must have confidence, a childlike faith, in Him. We need this assurance that God is truly our father.

Now, "Our Father in heaven". What does heaven suggest, when you bring that in? It's our destination, a perfect eternal place. Let's see, what does God sit on? It's a throne. So there's the idea of authority and power that's there. Our Father in heaven, he's over at all, like my wife prayed earlier. It's like this terrible circumstance with the invasion of Ukraine this last week. People are distraught. I have a son that's distraught about that. And it's disconcerting for all of us. But we trust that we have a sovereign God who's over all these things, who is bigger and in control of our times and our circumstances. Calvin says, The world and everything in it is held by his hand. Psalm 115:3, Our God is in heaven and he has done whatever he pleased. 2 Chronicles 2:6, ...the heavens do not contain him. When we think of him, we are not to form any low or earthly conceptions for he is higher than the whole world. His throne is in heaven. And it is there we're called to come boldly, to find grace and mercy in our time of need. Jesus is there in heaven as our mediator by His sacrifice. By His sacrifice, we can come to God. We had no standing before but now we can come based on his blood, that's been shed for us, for our sins, that gives us this right and privilege and ability to be able to come to him and to be His child. When you pray it's above this world. It's lifted up to the throne, lifted up as we cry out Heavenly Father.

So the first petition, first real petition is "hallowed be thy name". What is hallowed? Do you use that word a lot? I don't use hallowed. It's an old English word. And do you know what it means? It basically means holy. In fact, the CSB translates it "May your name be honored as holy". I think that's a good translation. Hallowed is the King James word, but it's in every other version. I was surprised, it's the NIV and NLT, all of them went there. So it means holy, set apart. John Stott says this, This petition suggests we set apart God's name as holy. It is already set apart, right? It's already set apart before we do it. And at one point time, Jesus name will be exalted, above every name. But our prayer is to treat his name as holy, honor Him and glorify Him due to his name. Martin Lloyd Jones says, When we pray, we must deliberately remind ourselves that we're going to talk to God, we're in the presence of God. I am now entering the audience chamber of that God, the Almighty, an absolute, eternal, great God with all his power and his might and majesty. That God, who is a consuming fire, that God, who is light in whom there is no darkness at all, the utter absolute Holy God, He is our Father. We should treat him with awesome respect. John Piper says this, gotta love John Piper, What a privilege we have. And one we should never take for granted. Your name be honored as holy. The idea is that we pray, we admire, esteem, honor, revere, treasure, and value God's name above everything else. So we begin by saying to God, we value you and your name is holy. We acknowledge and value you as infinitely unique, pure, undefiled, righteous and transcendent. You're the supreme and absolute treasure in all the universe. All other treasure is nothing by comparison. This sounded a lot like a song that we sang. Lord,

you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold. Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. And nothing I desire compares to you.

Verse 10, "Your kingdom come, your will be done". So what does that mean? God says his kingdom come. He wants to establish his kingdom here. How does he establish it? How's it being built? And how are we coming into this thing? Okay, so first, we're saved. Right? We come to him and we're saved. There's a second part. So believers are adding numbers to the kingdom through salvation. And then we're building believers deeper in the faith in sanctification so both ways build the kingdom. It's certainly and gradually coming as people, one by one, come to know Christ. A future kingdom will come when God will rule, we're looking forward to a future kingdom as well. We anticipate it, we look forward to it. This is God's plan. And he says next, your will be done. Which will are we talking about? God's will. And this is not my will, right. This is his will be done. And so is his will done? Well, his sovereign will is done. But he has set apart for us desires, like things that we should live up to, we don't always live up to what we would see as God's will for us, right? We sin. His sovereignty rules the universe, and his will is ultimately done. Ephesians 1:11 says, He works all things according to the counsel of his will.

"On earth as it is in heaven". What's heaven like? What kind of beings are there? Satan is there, isn't he. But he doesn't make chaos in heaven. No. He does here on earth. But he doesn't there in heaven. When God tells his angels to go do something, what happens? Like they're on it and they're enthusiastic about it and they're happy about it and they do it. So that's the way heaven works. What about on earth? According to God's will, it's not so much. Yeah, not at all. And in heaven, angels are on alert to carry out God's desire, we look forward to a day when the earth will be like that. But in the meantime, it's not there. It's in chaos and disorder. You know, my wife and I watch a TV series at night before we go to bed to kind of wind down. We got the total thing of Law and Order. And as I was looking at that the other night, I thought about that, Order. And the idea that the legal process, the law, is the police officers who arrest criminals, and order are the attorneys that fight for the law and try to convict criminals. And that's the order part of it. So the legal process brings order to this world, not completely, not as it should be, but it does bring order. And so God's law, his holy law of love, brings that to people's lives. And it brings order in chaos. We have people that have such disordered thinking, maybe they can't think at all sometimes, and there's order placed back in their lives as God, by His Spirit, rebuilds and works and regenerates their hearts. So we long for people around us to come to know Jesus, to have their lives changed, to become like him, a little bit more like Jesus as they grow in the knowledge of him. Believers make the world a better place. Heaven is going to be a great place, no more sin, no more sickness, no more pain. Charles Spurgeon says this, Oh, that you may reign, he's speaking to God, Oh, that you may reign over all hearts and lands. Men have thrown off their allegiance to our God and Father, and we pray with all our might, that he may, by his almighty Grace, subdue them to loyal obedience. We long for the coming of the King Jesus. Thy kingdom come, we desire for the supreme will to be done on earth. Our highest wish is for God's honor, dominion and glory to be right here. That's great.

Tim Keller does a study, a book on prayer that's really good. I wish I could tell you the whole title right now, but I can't. But in it, he studied three different church fathers on the Lord's Prayer, and about prayer in general, Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin. And he shares just a little bit of that. And so I want to share that with you. They kingdom come, Augustine says, God is reigning now, but just as light is absent to those who refuse to open their eyes, so it is possible to refuse God's rule. This is the cause of all our human problems, since we were created to serve him. And when we serve other things in God's place, all spiritual, psychological, cultural, and even material problems ensue. Therefore, we need his kingdom to come. Calvin believed there were two ways God's kingdom comes, through the Spirit who corrects our desires, and through the word of God, which sharpens our thoughts. And this then is a lordship petition. It is asking God to extend his royal power over every part of our lives, emotions, desires, thoughts and commitments. And now Luther, Luther always has a little different twist to throw into things and so he does here. But it's an interesting thought. He says, The reign of God on earth is only partial now but the fullness of the future kingdom is unimaginable, all suffering, injustice and poverty and death will be ended. To pray, thy kingdom come, is to yearn for that future life of justice, and peace, Thy will be done. David Platt, in his Christ Centered Commentary, shares this, I want God's kingdom to come today. I want his rule and reign in my life right now. I also pray and long for the day when His Glorious Name is honored as holy among all the nations throughout the universe. I want victory today as I battle the one Paul calls "the god of this age", 2 Corinthians 4:4, that is Satan. Even more, I long for the day when all the forces of evil and wickedness are banished to the regions of hell forever. And we enjoy the blessed and eternal promise of Revelation 21:4, "He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, death will be no more, grief, crying and pain will be no more". The kingdom of God is locked in a cosmic conflict with the transient and fleeting kingdoms of this world. This world is at war. And one of our greatest weapons in this war is prayer. And a battle prayer, that we should daily radio to our Heavenly Father, your kingdom come. We tell our Father, I want your kingdom not mine. I want your name to be honored, not mine. I want every sphere of my life to begin looking as it will look in the new creation. In my family, work, recreation and education, I want your kingdom to be present. In the battle for the souls of men and women, I ask you, my Father, to deploy your troops among the nations, equip your soldiers to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God as we advance your kingdom. Help us claim your promise that a day is coming when a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, which no one can number, will be standing before your throne and before the Lamb, Revelation 7:9. Help us Father, to long for and to daily pray for that day, when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. And He will reign forever and ever, Revelation 11:15. We could stop right there. But we're not going to because I've got three more petitions to go.

Second set of petitions, pray for our needs. Verse 11, "Give us this day our daily bread". What does that mean? Is it just talking about bread? It is everything we need for life. Is it speaking about our luxuries? No, it's our needs. And some church fathers took this to say, it's just talking about material stuff and that seems so lowly and it's out of place. And so we're going to spiritualize it and make it spiritual bread. And so some of these great church fathers did just that. And I like John Calvin's excellent response to this. He, because he's a theologian, he loves these guys. He reads these guys all the time. And

here's his response, "This is exceedingly absurd". I'm telling you, this is like cussing for Calvin to say this. Like these guys are crazy, that's what he's saying. It's not about that. Calvin says, It's not spiritual, but literal. Luther says this, Bread was a symbol of everything necessary to preserve life. He saw a social dimension to his prayer, then this is the part I actually meant to reference earlier. This is the little different twist that Luther puts on things. A social dimension, to get daily bread there must be a thriving economy in your society, right? Good employment and just society. Therefore to pray, give us, remember, we're praying as a community, corporately, all the people of our land, daily bread, is to pray against taking unfair advantage in business, trade, or of workers. Usually the poor are taken advantage of by everybody. He says they shouldn't be. It's a sin against God to do that, to take advantage of them. Calvin adds, Just because we ask God for food, doesn't mean it takes away our responsibility to work. The farmer needs to work in the field, of store owner needs to sell his goods. We need to work even though we pray. So what does the word today indicate? How big of a time period is today? There are 24 hours in today, we get needs for today. So just enough for then, God supplies our needs. And what about tomorrow? But, but there's tomorrow! Should I get stressed about tomorrow? The Bible says in Matthew 6 that we are not to be anxious about tomorrow. But I'm going to need to come back to him. Right? I'm going to have to come back to him and say, Please, provide this again. I'm dependent on you. That's where he wants us. And that's where we need to be.

Verse 12, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". So what is debt? It's our sin. It's not talking about money here. Sin is our greatest problem and forgiveness is our greatest need. That's what God provides, the most blessed, the greatest thing that he does for us, Spurgeon says, No prayer of mortal men could be complete without confession of sin. So what he's saying is, we're all sinners, all of us are sinners. Don't think you or I aren't, don't think it's different. We are all have the same fallen nature, of the flesh. So prayer which does not seek pardon will fail, as the Pharisees prayer failed. Let proud men boast as they please, those who are in Christ's kingdom will always pray, forgive us our debts. God provides free forgiveness through Jesus sacrifice. Thank him for that. Forgiveness of our debts include salvation of course, we come for salvation as we said, but we also come when we have a fight or an argument or a difficulty with a brother or a sister in Christ or the person you work with. What happens when that occurs? Is that relationship good. You know, after that argument, it's not good, is it? It's like there's a barrier there between you and them. And so what has to happen? You need to make it right. And the Bible says if you know this is true, if you're the person who's offended or the offender, either way, you're supposed to go and make this right with the other person. Because there's a barrier that exists there. And forgiveness has to be given or asked for. Our fellowship with God is a similar way, when we sinned daily, even though we've had all of our sins forgiven, past, present and future by the sacrifice of Jesus blood, which is infinitely powerful, still we hinder fellowship with God unless we come, and we're to come daily to ask forgiveness, to make that right with us and him. MacArthur says this, Though we have been forgiven the ultimate penalty of sin, as Christians, we need God's constant forgiveness for the sins we continue to commit. We're to pray therefore, forgive us. Forgiveness is the central theme of the entire passage, verses 9-15, with forgiveness being mentioned six times in just seven verses. Everything leads to or issues from forgiveness. As judge, God is eager to forgive

sinners. And as Father, he is even more eager to keep on forgiving his children. As vast and pervasive as the sin of man is, God's forgiveness is more vast and greater. When sin abounds, God's grace abounds even more, Romans 5:20.

It's difficult to confess sins, right? Is it hard for you? If you're dealing with somebody else, is it hard for you to come to them say, I sinned? It get stuck in my throat. I can't hardly say that. It. But I need to, I need to fess up to that. That's true, isn't it? When our hearts are sensitive and we've been doing this regularly, it's easier than if you've been storing it up awhile and you have a grudge built up. It's difficult to confess. Both Satan and our practical nature fight against it. Neither Satan nor my nature wants me to do it. But it's the only way to be free and have a joyful life. This is one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture. It's proverbs 28:13. It says, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy". Let me say it again, He who conceals his sins or transgressions will not prosper. But he confesses and forsakes them will find mercy. As we confess and are forgiven, we learn about God's grace in forgiving our debt. How big is our sin debt? The Bible says it's mountainous. And it's enough to send us to hell for eternity. Our sin debt is that big, that bad. Because we have been forgiven much, we should be a forgiving people, right? Sometimes people sinned against us in a big way. And it causes major damage to us or someone we love. Tony Evans says, Some people have been seriously sinned against, they have endured horrific cruelty. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that anything that comes the believers way, the good, the bad, and the ugly, has to come through God's fingers. God is sovereign and he permits things for the good of his children, even when we don't understand it, even when it's really, really ugly, and painful.

Just as in the story of Joseph. Now what happened to Joseph in the Old Testament? His brothers sold him into slavery, after abusing him. And he's thrown into prison, unjustly. So, human beings, that intend for evil against us, but God intends for good. That's what Joseph says. As he meets his brothers, he says those incredible words, through it all, through all the evil that you did against me, I saw God's hand, I saw God's good coming through and preserving me and rescuing me. God even lifted him up and placing him in a place of prominence, leadership, in Egypt. Forgiveness, in this setting, can be very difficult. It's not a one time easy thing. It's a process, isn't it? I mean, we've been through that process, we've been through a really difficult situation in our home with one of our kids. And it was a process, it didn't come immediately. It wasn't as easy as saying, I just forgive you and it's all over. No, it kept on going, day after day, we had to keep coming back to God. We needed to heart change. MacArthur says, Citizens of King God's kingdom are blessed and receive mercy because they themselves are merciful. They love even their enemies because they have the nature of the Heavenly Father with them. That's Matthew 5:44-45. Forgiveness is the mark of a truly regenerate heart. Still, we failed to be consistent with the mark and need constant exhortation because of the strength of the sinful flesh, Romans 7:14-25. It is hard at times to forgive, especially if we have been deeply hurt, or others around us have been deeply hurt. Forgiveness becomes a process but in the process, it is good to pray daily, God helped me as I seek to forgive those who trespassed against me and my family. I don't have it in me, I don't have it in me to forgive. It takes God's love, God's grace and God's forgiveness for us to

be able to do it in those really hard circumstances. We are motivated to forgive by God's example.

It's interesting, as you read through some of these letters in the New Testament, as we just finished reading through Ephesians, and it's telling us things that we need to do in our Christian life. And it just takes the gospel and injects the gospel into this situation. And it does that here in Ephesians 4:32. He's talking about communication. And then he tells us to forgive as we've been forgiven. Well, now, how are you forgiven and who forgives you? God the Father. And how much does he know? He knows everything. But the God who knows absolutely everything and has every fact and understanding in his mind takes and casts, as far as the east is from the west to be remember no more, your sin. He says, I'm going to choose to forget that. And he does it because of Jesus sacrifice for us, his shed blood. And that's what we're to choose to do. Because our debt, remember, was mountainous, and people who sin against us is smaller. And we're to be forgiving people because he forgave us. It reflects God's gracious forgiveness. The forgiving of another person's sin expresses the highest virtue of man.

Verse 13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". What does that mean? Some people take the word temptation to mean trial. But are trials always evil? No. But temptations, can they lead to evil if we give in to them? Yes. I think that it's more of the idea here of temptation that can lead us into sin. These verses are not separate. But these parts go together and "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". There is an inherent evil, along with the temptation, especially as we're tempted, and as we would yield to them. This petition is meant to keep us from temptation which could lead us to sin. Evil can be translated, evil one, or evil. So it could be that he speaks of Satan. Or he could be just speaking of sin here. Which is equally as bad because they both want to do what to us? They both want to take us out, take us down. Satan is out to destroy our soul. But God preserves believers from sin and Satan. We're in need of grace to do both. We're inherently weak, and we're prone to wander, like the hymn says. We need God's strength, given to us by His Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. There's a battle that goes on all of our lives between the flesh and the spirit. As long as you have breath, there'll be a battle, and you'll be in it while you're here on the earth. We need God's help, His Word, His Spirit, and prayer is a vital tool, as we saw in Ephesians 6 about the armor of God. He gives us the full armor of God. But what's the next thing he speaks about? It's prayer. That's an offensive weapon against Satan. It allows us to stand, prayer in the Spirit allows us to stand against even Satan. And is he stronger than us? Well, yes and no. Yes because he is a very powerful being, if we stood against him and our own strength, as Luther says, we would be losing. But if we stand in the armor of God, in his strength, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. That's Phillipians 4:13.

Calvin says, regarding temptations, there are two temptations. You find this in many verses in Proverbs also, there's a temptation to the right and a temptation to the left. The right is regarding being rich and well off, the left is being in poverty and not having, Calvin says there is temptation in both places. The right tempts us to reject God's power and honor, it tempts us into the sin of thinking we do not need God. From the left comes poverty, disgrace, contempt and afflictions which tempt us to despair, to lose all hope, to

become angry at God. So both prosperity and poverty or adversity are tests to draw our eyes away from God, onto ourselves, and to inordinate desires. An important insight as a reminder that the Lord's Prayer was given in plural form, again, deliver us, as a body, as we pray together. I'm telling you, I can't get the message across strong enough, being in the body, here physically, there is strength that comes as we pray together publicly as a body. That's another good reason to be here. We're surrounded by evil in the world. Have you felt evil this week? My wife shared about Ukrainian fight against the Russian invasion. We felt that. I know each of us deals with other things in our lives, struggles with sin, feel weak at times. MacArthur shares this, In a cursed world, where we're battered by evil all around us, we confess our inadequacy to deal with evil. We confess the weakness of our flesh and the absolute impotency of human resources to combat sin and rescue us from its clutches. Above all, we confess our need for the protection and deliverance of our loving Heavenly Father.

The last verses, 14 and 15, are kind of a rehash of verse 12, with the idea that as we're forgiven, we will be a forgiving people. He will not forgive those who will not forgive. If we don't forgive, God won't forgive us. Does that mean that I can't go to heaven if I don't forgive? Well, there's an interesting thing here. If you're an unforgiving person, you live life consistently as an unforgiving person, you might not be saved. If you cling to that. But just as a matter of course, if you're having a moment of unforgiveness in a situation, that's not going to keep you out of heaven. But it is an opportunity to repent and then forgive. I have to question my own heart, if I'm going to dig in my heels and be an unforgiving person. Then am I really right with God? Because he says the nature of a believer is that they're going to be forgiving. Salvation is not dependent on us forgiving, but certainly fellowship with God is, it does hinder that fellowship. If we can distance ourselves from God and refuse to forgive others, we should examine our hearts to see where we are with God. Choose to forgive as you have been forgiven by your loving, gracious heavenly Father. That is who he is. He is a forgiving God, we should be a forgiving people. He is a good good Father.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for these words that you give us, The Lord's Prayer. We don't know how to pray on our own. We don't know what we need. But we come to you. And we trust you. We know that you're a great, Almighty God that's Holy. And we know that you care for us as a father to a child. We just ask that you help us to be regular in coming to pray daily before you and to help us to be in awe and have awesome respect for who you are. And we thank you for your grace and your mercy that comes through the cross, that we have forgiveness of our sins. We thank you for all these things. In Jesus name, Amen.