

## Matthew 6:1-18

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### Context: Godward Contrasts

It is conventional to describe Matt 5:21-48 as the “antitheses,” contrasting the Lord’s teaching with something (whether the Jewish tradition promoted by the scribes and Pharisees, as I believe, or the Old Testament itself). But in fact the rhetoric of contrast extends all the way into chapter 6.

- The form of the contrast changes: instead of highlighting the oral tradition, it draws our attention to “the hypocrites” (vv. 2, 5, 16, one reference in each of the three sections) and “the heathen” (v. 7).
- This change in form reflects a change in the subject of the teaching. We have moved from our manward duty in ch. 5 to our duty to God; from the second table of the law to the first.

The repeated reference to “the hypocrites” points to the Jewish leaders, to whom the Lord applies the title in his sevenfold denunciation in ch. 23, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (vv. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). This observation reinforces our understanding of what “was said” in ch. 5 as the Jewish oral tradition.

Structurally, vv. 2-4, 5-6, and 16-17 are strongly parallel (Table 1). Each of them is marked by seven shared features:

6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.		
2 Therefore <b>when thou</b> doest <i>thine</i> alms, do not <b>sound a trumpet</b> before thee, <b>as the hypocrites do</b> in the synagogues and in the streets, <b>that they may</b> have glory of men. <b>Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.</b> 3 <b>But when thou</b> doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be <b>in secret:</b> and <b>thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.</b>	5 And <b>when thou</b> prayest, thou shalt not be <b>as the hypocrites are:</b> for they love to <b>pray standing</b> in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, <b>that they may</b> be seen of men. <b>Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.</b> 6 <b>But thou, when thou</b> prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is <b>in secret;</b> and <b>thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.</b>	16 Moreover <b>when ye</b> fast, <b>be not, as the hypocrites,</b> of a sad countenance: for <b>they disfigure their faces,</b> <b>that they may</b> appear unto men to fast. <b>Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.</b> 17 <b>But thou, when thou</b> fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is <b>in secret:</b> and <b>thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.</b>
	7 But <b>when ye</b> pray, <b>use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do:</b> for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, ... Amen. 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.	

Table 1: Symmetry and Deviations in Matt 6:1-18

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1. the statement “when thou”
2. a reference to a good deed
3. a forbidden practice associated with “the hypocrites”
4. the motive of the hypocrites to be seen or heard by men
5. a contrasting instruction, “but thou,”
6. an exhortation to secrecy
7. the promise that “thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

Two sections are not part of this strong parallelism: v. 1, and vv. 7-15 (the Lord’s Prayer). We will see that v. 1 is an introduction to the whole section, just as 5:20 is to the first set of contrasts, while vv. 7-15 are supplemental instruction on corporate prayer balancing the exhortation to private prayer in vv. 5-6.

### 1 Introductory Summary

Three details invite our attention here: the structural function of the verse, the textual reading “alms” (replaced by “righteousness” in all modern translations), and the reference to “reward” that pervades the entire section.

#### **Structural Function**

**1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward μισθον of your Father which is in heaven.**--Like 5:20, this is an introductory verse, setting the theme of the contrasts to follow (Table 2).

The subject in question	5:20 your righteousness	6:1 your alms
<b>Association with the Scribes and Pharisees</b>	Exceed the scribes and Pharisees	Do not ... to be seen of men (23:5)
<b>Loss of heavenly blessing</b>	Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven	Ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven

Table 2: 5:20 and 6:1 as Headings

The association of 6:1 with the scribes and Pharisees is clear from the expression “to be seen of men,” which occurs elsewhere in the Greek Bible only in Matt 23:5,

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do **for to be seen of men**: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

#### **“Alms” vs. “Righteousness”**

The parallel between these two headings is so strong that an early scribe (in or before the fourth century) replaced “alms” with the more general term “righteousness,” yielding an exact parallel with 5:20. But there are three reasons to prefer our text.

1. The Greek word translated “alms” (ελεημοσυνη) is clearly the majority reading.
2. Many of the δικαιουσιναι of 5:20-48 are in the nature of the case publicly visible, so that repetition of the same term here would lead to a contradiction.

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3. One of the actions that our Lord here commands (the Lord's Prayer) is in fact not private, but corporate, so a general prohibition of public piety would contradict the teaching of the following section.

I suspect that the force of the structural parallel was so strong that an early scribe felt compelled to "improve" on the symmetry.

How can "alms" be a summary when it is also one of the specific examples? We have a clue in the usage of ποιῶ ελεημοσύνη in the LXX. The expression appears only twice in the canonical books, where ελεημοσύνη refers to righteous behavior that is more general than almsgiving (chart):

Gen 47:29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and **deal kindly** עשה חסד and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

Psa 103:6 The LORD **executeth righteousness** עשה צדקה and judgment for all that are oppressed.

But in the apocryphal books, written in the intertestamental period, the expression has become a common one for giving to the poor. In v. 1 our Lord is using the word in its more general sense, which then shifts naturally to the specific sense in 2-4. The difference is reflected in the construction: "do alms" as in 6:2 is the standard expression for giving to the poor, but "do thine alms" (6:1) is unparalleled. Like a pebble in a pond, the principle of v.1 expands outward to encompass other forms of piety.<sup>1</sup>

The three contrasts in this section, even the first one, focus on our service to God. That is why they can be secret and still effective. We are looking at the Lord's exposition of the first table of the law, which concerns our duty to love God with all of our heart.

### **God's Reward for his People**

A dominant theme of this section is the idea that God rewards his servants, expressed once in the summary and twice in each paragraph (once by the noun μισθον and once by the verb αποδιδωμι).

At first glance, this theme seems in tension with the doctrine that salvation is a free, unmerited gift of God. In fact, Paul uses this very word "reward" μισθον to say what our salvation is not (chart):

Rom 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the **reward** not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Yet the Scriptures just as pervasively teach that God does reward good works. In addition to Matt 6:1-18, consider these examples:<sup>2</sup>

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great **reward**.

Gen 30:18 And Leah said, God hath given me my **hire**, because I have given my maiden to my

<sup>1</sup> This will be a species of Amplificatio in Bullinger's scheme, probably Diexodos (expansion).

<sup>2</sup> All are μισθος and MT שכר unless otherwise noted.

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husband: and she called his name Issachar.

Rut 2:12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full **reward** **משכרה** be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Psa 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a **reward** **פרי אקפוס** for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Pro 11:18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure **reward**.

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your **reward** in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

1Co 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the **prize**? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible **crown** **στεφανος**; but we an incorruptible.

2Ti 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown** **στεφανος** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

This apparent tension can be relieved when we consider these two principles as the extremes of a sequence of events (chart).

- Salvation is by grace, through faith, apart from works:

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

- Salvation is how we receive the Holy Spirit:

Joh 7:39 But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive:

- The Spirit is the only way we have to understand the Word of God:

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

- The Word of God is what produces righteous conduct in our lives:

2Ti 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- These good works, the “fruit of the Spirit,” are what God rewards, as the verses above teach.

In other words, God’s reward to us is for works that he enables us to perform, which is perhaps why the 24 elders in the Revelation cast their crowns back at the feet of the Lord:

Rev 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art

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worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

This sequence makes sense, but one should always be cautious about theological conclusions that depend on an extended chain of derivation from texts drawn from different contexts. In this case, the legitimacy of tying these concepts together is affirmed by single texts that combine multiple parts of the chain. Eph 2:8-9 brings together salvation by grace and godly conduct, while Tit 3:4-8 spans the entire chain (Table 3).

	Ephesians 2	Titus 3
Salvation is by <b>grace</b> , apart from works	8 For by grace are ye <b>saved</b> through faith; and that not of yourselves: <i>it is</i> the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.	4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, ... 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
Salvation brings the <b>Spirit</b> ...		by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour
... who explains the <b>Word</b> of God...		8 <i>This is</i> a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly,
... which produces <b>godly conduct</b> ...	10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.	that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.
...which yields <b>rewards</b>		These things are good and profitable unto men.

Table 3: Summary Texts for the Reward Chain

**otherwise ye have no reward μισθον of your Father which is in heaven.**--Our text warns, and the following verses substantiate, that the very same deed will or will not be rewarded by God, depending on the motives of the one who does it. This notion violates the world's idea that the goodness of a deed depends on the deed itself, regardless of who does it. Our study of rewards explains the difference.

God's purpose in creation is to glorify himself. He rewards us only to highlight the transformation that he has wrought in us, and to give us crowns to return to him in worship. In the words of David (chart),

1Ch 29:14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Good works that people do without acknowledging his gracious gifts, even the common gifts of life and strength, do not bring him glory. They are done "to be seen of men," to emphasize the creature rather than the creator. They are insults to him, not acts of worship, as Isaiah realized, and will not bring his reward of approbation:

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;

## 2-4, Giving Alms

**2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms,**--Drop the italicized "thine." The sense of the word shifts here, and the Lord marks that by changing the construction.

The Lord says "when," not "if." He assumes that his people will give to the poor. This is a constant expectation throughout both the OT and the NT, and in both cases we are taught to consider the deed as something done to the Lord, for which he will reward us (chart). As throughout the sermon, the Lord is not innovating, but reinforcing the teaching of the OT.

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Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again *למלך ανταποδίδωμι*.

Isa 58:6 *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.*

2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Heb 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

**do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets,--**

The Lord might mean that the Pharisees announced their charity with trumpets, ostensibly to draw the beggars, but in fact to advertise their generosity.<sup>3</sup> Or he may use the expression metaphorically, as it is probably used in 1 Sam 13:3 (chart),

1Sa 13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. 4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines ...

It is unlikely that Saul went through all the land literally blowing a trumpet; the sense seems to be that he publicly announced Jonathan's victory (which he claimed as his own). In fact, his deceptive ostentation may inspire our Lord's use of the term here.<sup>4</sup>

**as the hypocrites do**—The LXX gives us little help with this word, which appears only twice, as the translation of a word that more generally means “profane, irreligious.”<sup>5</sup> So we must turn to the usage of the word in pagan Greek. There, the word almost always means “actor,” somebody on the stage, and thus naturally comes to mean somebody whose actions are not genuine, but performed for the sake of an audience, which is exactly the point here.<sup>6</sup>

**that they may have glory of men.**--Their motive is to seek their own glory, that is, to draw attention to

3 There is no other evidence for such a practice in first century Judaism, though Robertson in his *Word Pictures* reports a missionary's description of such a practice in India. Other suggestions are that the reference is to the trumpet-like receptacles for gifts in the temple (Edersheim) or to the use of trumpets to announce fasts, times when alms were often given. While possible, these interpretations require extra-biblical knowledge, and I prefer explanations that can be substantiated within the text of Scripture itself.

4 Another possible OT parallel is the use of trumpets to announce sacrifices in the temple, Num 10:10; Psa 81:1-3; 2Ch 7:6; 29:27. In this case, the Pharisees would be presenting themselves as priests making sacrifices.

5 See notes

6 Carson, following Spieler (AUSS 13, 1975, 273-279), distinguishes those who are consciously deceitful from those who deceive themselves but not their observers and a third group who deceive both themselves and their observers, which is likely the case here.

Liddell-Scott notes another meaning, “an interpreter or expounder.” While this is not prominent in the Hellenistic era, it would give an interesting nuance to the Lord's choice of term, since the scribes and Pharisees presented themselves as the interpreters or expounders of the Mosaic law.



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themselves. Solomon recognized the folly of this motive (chart):

Pro 25:27 *It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.*<sup>7</sup>

It is contrary to the example of our Lord ...

Joh 8:50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

...and of his apostles:

1Th 2:5-6 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God *is* witness: 6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others,

Our purpose is rather to seek God's glory, to draw everyone's attention to him and show them how wonderful he is:

Joh 7:18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

There is no unrighteousness in the one who seeks God's glory, leading us to suspect the moral character of those who seek their own glory and thus put themselves in competition with God.

The spirit of this principle will come into focus when we study the Lord's Prayer, which requires our first request of God, and our deepest desire, to be,

Mat 6:9 Hallowed be thy name.

**Verily I say unto you, They have their reward μισθον.**--Their reward is the public approval of their good deeds. According to v. 1, they should not expect any further reward from God.

**3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret:**--So far from announcing our charity publicly, we should try to conceal it so that even we don't know what we have done. How different this attitude is from the modern practice common in universities, hospitals, and public places, where donors memorialize their names in the institutions that they endow.

The need to conceal our good deeds arises from the weakness of the flesh. We often have difficulty discerning our true motives:

Psa 19:12 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

Given the strength of the flesh, we should be very cautious not to do anything to encourage it.

**and thy Father which seeth in secret**—We are reminded of the Lord's words to Samuel when he was seeking God's chosen king among Jesse's sons:

1Sa 16:7 for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

As Psalm 19 reminds us, we can deceive ourselves, but the Lord knows our true motives, and whether our good deeds are motivated by true obedience to him, or whether we are seeking our own glory.

**himself shall reward αποδομι thee openly.**--Here is the promise of reward that we studied in

<sup>7</sup> The need to supply "not" before "glory" reflects the notorious difficulty of the second half of the verse; see Waltke's commentary for an extended discussion. The simplest solution is to understand the force of the negative in the first half of the verse to carry over to the second half.

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connection with v. 1. His open reward to us is his way of showing his glory to his creation, demonstrating how he has overcome the power of sin and turned rebels into his servants.

Eph 3:21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

### 5-15, Prayer

This section is longer than the other two. The first two verses are closely parallel with vv. 2-4 and 16-17. But vv. 7-15 are not. In addition, they contrast with vv. 5-6, and with the theme of secrecy that pervades the rest of the section; the occasion is “when ye [plural] pray,” and the prayer itself presumes that it is offered by a group of people, who together confess, “Our Father.” The Lord may place this exhortation to corporate prayer here to emphasize that his exhortation to private prayer does not reduce the importance of public prayer.

### 5-6, Private Prayer

**5 And when thou prayest,**--Again, the problem that the Lord is correcting is not the righteous action in which the Pharisees were engaging. The Lord assumes that his people will pray (chart):

Psa 55:17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Pro 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Mat 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Mat 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Luk 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Eph 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Col 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

1Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

**thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets,**--This practice comes up again in the later condemnation of the religious leaders in Matthew 23 (chart).

Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

“Pretence” recalls Matt 6:5-6, while “long” recalls the warning of 6:7.



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He mentions the synagogues and the streets, but there was another place where prayer was made, the temple:

Luk 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

Act 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*.

Certainly, it would be possible to pray ostentatiously there as well, as the Pharisee in Luke 18 shows. But the Lord does not mention it in this passage, perhaps because it was a God-ordained place of corporate prayer. Indeed, when Solomon dedicated the temple, he expected it to be a place where people would cry out to God for help (1 Kings 8:23-53). Note the frequency of the invocation, “hear thou from heaven” (vv. 30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49) in response to what is prayed in or toward the temple. And recall what God promises Isaiah about the temple in the coming kingdom:

Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

**that they may be seen of men.**--Again, their motive is that people would see them and think well of them.

**Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.**--And again, that human recognition is all that they should expect. They have placed themselves in competition with God for glory, and they should not expect him to help them fight against him.

**6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret;**--For many people from a denominational background, prayer is something that you do in church, as part of a liturgy, and it’s a surprise to know that we can talk personally, and directly, to our great God. Opening this channel is one of the most blessed results of our Lord’s passion (chart):

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

The Scriptures give us many examples of private prayer, often very deliberate on the part of the person praying.

2Ki 4:33 (Elijah and the Shunnamite’s son) He went in therefore, and **shut the door upon them twain**, and prayed unto the LORD.

Mat 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, **he went up into a mountain apart** to

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pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Mat 26:36-39 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, **while I go and pray yonder**.

Act 9:40 But Peter **put them all forth**, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

Act 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter **went up upon the housetop to pray** about the sixth hour:

As we have seen throughout the sermon, our Lord is not presenting any new standards, but reinforcing the teaching of the Old Testament.

At the same time, he is careful not to let the abuses of the Pharisees lead to rejection of group prayer, and adds a special discussion related to this topic.

**and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.**--For the second time, he reminds them that our private piety will not go unnoticed, and that God will glorify us in due time, in a way that extends his own glory.

### **7-15, Public Prayer**

The Lord's exhortation to privacy in prayer in vv. 5-6 might be thought to exclude corporate prayer. To guard against this, he adds a special exhortation, which is in keeping with his encouragement to our prayer together elsewhere (chart):

Mat 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if **two of you shall agree** on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Mat 21:22 And all things, whatsoever **ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive**.

Act 1:14 These all **continued with one accord in prayer and supplication**, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Act 2:42 And they **continued stedfastly** in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in **prayers**.

Act 4:24 And when they heard that, they **lifted up their voice to God with one accord**, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

It is remarkable that he singles out prayer for this special discussion. We know that the early church on occasion engaged in corporate giving (the collection for the saints in Jerusalem) and fasting (Acts 13). But this is the one corporate exercise for which the Lord gives specific instruction.

The one point of similarity with the three main paragraphs in this section is that the Lord begins with a prohibition founded on a contrast with another group (in this case, the heathen rather than "the hypocrites"), then moves on to positive exhortation. But here, he returns to a final warning.

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### 7-8, Don't babble like the heathen

**7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,**--The translation has been understood to forbid repetition in prayer. But this is contrary both to the word itself and to other Scriptural instruction.

Lexically, the word appears to originate here, so we must be cautious about its meaning, but it is derived from terms that describe a stutterer or a stammerer. A translation such as “babble, prate, stammer on” would be much more appropriate. The Lord goes on to describe this faulty prayer as “much speaking,” generating lots of words without meaning.

Repetition itself is not wrong. Elsewhere in Scripture, we that godly people do repeat themselves in prayer (chart). Our Lord in Gethsemane prayed three times that the cup might depart from him, each time “saying the same words” (Matt 26:44), and stopped only when interrupted by the arrival of the soldiers. Paul prayed three times that the Lord would remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:8), and stopped only when the Lord made clear to him that this weakness was something in which he should glory. In fact, the very prayer that our Lord goes on to give is one that he says should be used “whenever *otav* you pray” (Luke 11:1).

The attitude that is condemned is not our freedom to “cast all your care upon him,” being assured of his paternal care (1 Pet 5:7), but rather the idea that the efficacy of a prayer is directly related to how often it is uttered, and that we can bend the deity to our will by the sheer volume of prayer.

**as the heathen do:**--One thinks of Tibetan prayer wheels (chart), which contain the Buddhist mantra *om mani padme hum* and are spun around, each revolution conveying the same merit as saying the prayer once. The more times the sacred syllables are repeated, the more merit they accumulate.

An excellent illustration of the difference between the prayer of a believer and that of the heathen is in the encounter of Elijah with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. The pagan prophets prayed repeatedly the same thing, “O Baal, hear us,” and when he didn't hear, they prolonged their prayer and their urgency:

1Ki 18:26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, **O Baal, hear us.** הַבַּעַל עֲנֵנוּ But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

By contrast, Elijah's prayer was direct and to the point:

1Ki 18:36-37 And it came to pass at *the time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have done* all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

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The believer's repeated prayer does not force God to hear us, but reinforces our relation with him. As long as my heart is troubled about something, God's door is open to me. By coming to him, I am reminded that he is in control. As we mature, we learn calm our hearts by recalling the promises of Scripture, just as Paul calmed his heart with the Lord's specific revelation to him. But throughout our life, we should respond to troubling thoughts, not with worry and fret, but by casting them on the Lord as many times as we need to remind ourselves that he is taking care of us. No father resents repeated requests for encouragement from a frightened child. We want our children to come to us as often as they feel troubled, recognizing that as they mature, these requests will become less frequent.

**for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.**--The Lord's explanation of his instruction confirms our interpretation. Their confidence is not in "much praying," but in "much speaking"<sup>8</sup> (chart). All of Scripture exhorts us to pray much, to be instant [persistent] in prayer (Rom 12:12), to pray without ceasing (1 Thes 5:17), to cast all our care upon the Lord (1 Pet 5:7). Luke writes with approval of Anna, who welcomed the infant Jesus in the temple,

Luk 2:37 And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

But one can speak in the direction of God without praying, and such speaking is vain.

Ecc 5:2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.<sup>9</sup>

**8 Be not ye therefore like unto them:**--Here is the general rule of holiness, of being a separate people: don't be like the heathen. Repeatedly the Scriptures exhort us to be separate, distinct, holy (chart):

Num 16:21 **Separate yourselves** from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

Ezr 10:11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and **separate yourselves** from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man that **walketh not** in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Pro 9:6 **Forsake the foolish**, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

Isa 52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

2Co 6:17 Wherefore **come out from among them, and be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

**for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.**--This is the character of the promised kingdom:

Isa 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

<sup>8</sup> The observation is due to Augustine.

<sup>9</sup> Recall Claudius' admission after his vain attempt to pray in Hamlet Act 3 Scene 3, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

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God doesn't need to be told what we need, and if we are redeemed with the blood of his son, he doesn't need to be persuaded to give us what we need. The primary purpose of prayer is not to inform or persuade God, but to maintain our relation with him.

### 9-13, The Pattern Prayer

#### 9, *After this manner*

**9 After this manner therefore pray ye:**--The English is sometimes understood to indicate that we should follow the pattern, but not the very words, of the prayer. But when Luke records another instance of the giving of this prayer (11:2-4), he records the Lord's instruction, "Whenever οταν ye pray, say ...." The Greek adverb ουτως translated "after this manner" is often used to indicate the very words of a message (chart):

It is used to express how Rachel reported the words of Abraham's servant to her brother:

Gen 24:30 he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, **Thus** spake the man unto me;

It reports the words of Laban's proposal to Jacob:

Gen 31:8 If he said **thus**, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled:

It is how Jacob charges his servants to carry his message to Esau:

Gen 32:4 And he commanded them, saying, **Thus** shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

It is how Joseph's brother report the supposed last words of Jacob to him:

Gen 50:17 **So** shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil:

Jephthah's messengers to the king of Ammon begin their message,

Jdg 11:15 **Thus** saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:

Our Lord is not just giving us a vague pattern. He is telling us words that we may use to frame our thoughts appropriately.

So, throughout the history of the church, this prayer has been part of the church's common practice. We hear its echoes throughout the pages of the NT.

- Paul reminds the Romans and Galatians how they cry "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6)
- He begins eleven of his epistles (all except Gal, 2 Tim, and Titus) with a blessing "from God, our Father"
- The first epistle of Peter echoes the prayer throughout (Table 4, chart)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The observation is due to Bengel, *Gnomon*, *ad loc*. I have modified some references. In particular, he does not note the correspondence of 5:11 to the doxology.

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Our Father;	1:3 hath <b>begotten</b> us again, 1:14 as obedient <b>children</b> , 1:17 if ye call on the <b>Father</b> , 1:23 being <b>born</b> again, 2:2 as newborn <b>babes</b>
Which art in heaven	1:4 an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved <b>in heaven</b> for you,
Hallowed be thy name.	1:15 But as he which hath called you is <b>holy</b> , so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for <b>I am holy</b> .
Thy kingdom come.	2:9 But ye <i>are</i> a chosen generation, a <b>royal</b> priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; 2:15 for so is the <b>will</b> of God; 3:17 for it is better if the <b>will</b> of God be so, 4:2 he no longer should live the rest of
Thy will be done.	<i>his</i> time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the <b>will</b> of God. 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the <b>will</b> of God commit the keeping of their souls <i>to him</i> in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.
On earth as it is in heaven	3:21 Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; <b>angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him</b> .
Give us this day our daily bread	3:12 For the eyes of the Lord <i>are</i> over the righteous, and his ears <i>are open</i> unto their prayers: 5:7 Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you 3:8 Finally, <i>be ye</i> all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, <i>be</i> pitiful, <i>be</i> courteous:
Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors	9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.
Lead us not into temptation.	4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:
Deliver us from the evil	4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be <b>saved</b> ,
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen	5:11 To him <i>be</i> glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
Table 4: The Lord's Prayer in Peter's First Epistle	

### **Body of the Prayer**

The prayer as we have it in our version is an inclusio around an alternation, A BC BC A (Figure 1, chart).

- The outer frame, A, describes the one to whom we bring our petitions, while the center section contains the petitions (marked for the most part as imperative clauses).
- The petitions fall into two groups. The first asks for God's glory, while the second asks for our needs.
- Each of these groups ends with something distinct from the body of the group (the adverbial phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" in v. 10; the disjunction "but deliver us from evil" in v. 13. I will suggest that each of these elements is connected not just to the immediately preceding request, but to the entire group of three requests that it closes.

This structure reminds us of two practical lessons about prayer.

1. Prayer is not just asking for things. In the outer frame, we acknowledge to God who he is. This exercise is the heart of worship. When we come to the Lord, we should focus our minds on who he is. The prayer gives a particularly good example of two focal points of such meditation. It starts with his mercy and accessibility, and ends with his power and majesty.
2. Prayer is not random. While there is nothing wrong with spontaneous prayer, there is also a place for prayer that is planned and ordered. When we speak with an important person, we prepare our thoughts in advance. There's nothing wrong with doing the same with God.



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### 9a, Address (Declarative)

**Our Father**—The notion that God is the father of his people first emerges about the time of the Exodus (chart):

Exo 4:22 thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn:

Moses rebukes the people in his valedictory hymn,

Deu 32:6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? **is not he thy father** that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Isaiah leads the people in praying for deliverance on this basis:

Isa 63:16 Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: **thou, O LORD, art our father**, our redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting.

Yet this truth never made it into the heart of God’s people. They knew that the promised king would be known as “the son of God”:

2Sa 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. ... 14 **I will be his father, and he shall be my son.**

Psa 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, **Thou art my Son**; this day have I begotten thee.

Psa 89:26 He shall cry unto me, **Thou art my father, my God**, and the rock of my salvation. 27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Nearly 200 times, David in the Psalms cries out, “O Lord,” more than 90 times “O God,” and more than 50 times “My god.” Not once does he pray “My father” or “our father.”<sup>11</sup>

Recall our Lord’s discussion with the Pharisees, in which they think of Abraham, not God, as their father:

Joh 8:38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with

11 The only reference to God as a father in the Psalms is 103:13, “Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” This Psalm is ascribed to David, but not grouped with the other Davidic psalms.

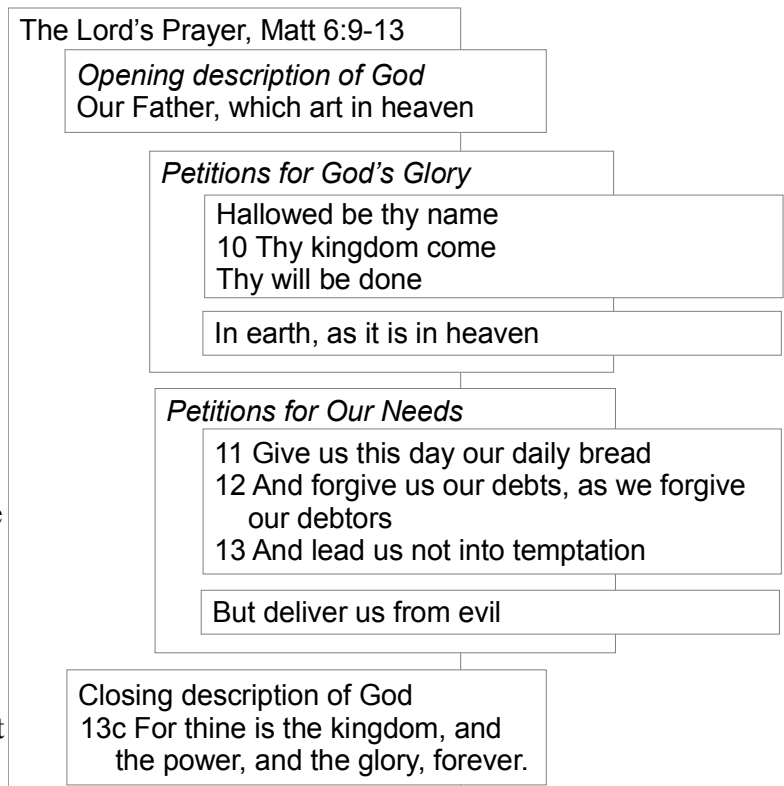


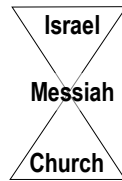
Figure 1: The Structure of the Lord's Prayer

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your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, **Abraham is our father.**

It took the coming of God's unique Son, the Lord Jesus, to teach us what the fatherhood of God really means.

The overall pattern reflects Isaiah's use of the expression "servant of the Lord," which starts as a description of Israel, narrows down to the Messiah, but then opens back out to encompass the people of God in the kingdom (Illustration 2, chart).



	41:8-13	42:1-7	42:19	43:10	43:22-44:5	44:21-23	44:26	48:20	49:1-13	50:4-9	50:10	52:13-53:12
<b>Israel</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X			
<b>Messiah</b>	X	X		X					X	X	X	X
<b>Church</b>		X							X	X		X
	Servant Mostly <span style="color: green;">Israel</span>								Servant Mostly <span style="color: magenta;">Messiah</span>			

*Illustration 1: The "Servant" Hourglass in Isaiah*

*Application:* The first declaration in the prayer concerns God's loving attitude toward us. It claims access as his children. It reminds us of the famous photograph of JohnJohn playing under Kennedy's desk in the oval office (Illustration 2, chart).

**which art in heaven,**--This designation distinguishes the Father to whom we pray from others in two ways.

First, it distinguishes him from our earthly fathers, avoiding the error of the Pharisees in John 8.

Second, it distinguishes him from pagan gods. The Canaanite gods were conceived to dwell on a tall mountain in the north of the Levant, just as the Greek gods were thought to live on the heights of Mount Olympus. They were elevated, but still residents of earth. In general, pagan gods are conceived as being like people, only bigger and stronger. But our God dwells in the heavens. Biblical faith recognizes a bright line between the creature and the creator, a line that our Lord reinforces by reminding us that we pray to one who lives in a place we cannot go on our own.

Our Lord's invocation of our Father's heavenly throne reminds us of the refrain in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (chart: 1 Kings 8:30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49), "hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place." This was the focus of Israel as they gathered in the temple, God's "house of prayer" (Isa 56:7).



*Illustration 2: JohnJohn's access to his father*  
 (<http://cdn.rsvlts.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/JFK-and-JFK-Jr-Oval-Office-Desk-PX-65-105227.jpg>)

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Now that the Messiah has come, the Church is the temple of God:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Our Lord is the new Solomon, dedicating the church as the new temple, the “house of prayer.”

### 9b-10, Petitions Concerning God (Imperative)

#### Hallowed be thy name.

The word “hallow” (chart) translates the Greek verb *αγιαζω*, usually translated “sanctify.” It corresponds to the Hebrew *קדש* C “make holy, set apart.”

Name = the person in his full revealed character, not just the name itself

The “name” can be a synonym for the Lord himself:

Psa 20:1 The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;  
2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

Isa 30:27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof is* heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: 28 And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity:

The Lord’s ministry, according to John 1, is to reveal the Father:

Joh 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Here’s how he describes what he did just before his sacrifice:

Joh 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:

Joh 17:25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name,

To declare God’s name is to reveal the Father.

This identity between the name of God and his person explains the high honor due to his name: it reflects our attitude toward him. This is why taking his name in vain is so serious an offense (chart):

Exo 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

It reflects our attitude toward him. Six times Leviticus cautions us not to profane *ללה* the name of the Lord. Here’s an example that shows the parallel between the name and the Lord himself:

Lev 22:2 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things

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of the children of Israel, and that they **profane** not my holy name *in those things* which they hallow unto me: I *am* the LORD. ...31 Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I *am* the LORD. 32 Neither shall ye **profane** my holy name; but I will be **hallowed** among the children of Israel: I *am* the LORD which hallow you,

*Application:* These two references to profaning God's name refer to coming before him in worship when one is in a state of uncleanness. This kind of conduct lies behind the Lord's condemnation of the nation in Isaiah for their worship—they followed the liturgy, but their lives were impure, and thus they profaned the Lord's name. The principle is the same in the NT: when we come to the Lord's Table, we are first to examine ourselves, and then to discern the Lord's body. Superficial worship when our hearts are not right before the Lord is worse than no worship. It is a profaning of the Lord's name.

So for God's name to be hallowed, or sanctified, means that he is set apart, honored and respected as he ought to be as Lord and creator of the earth. The actual expression, "to sanctify the name," appears twice in the OT, both times in prophetic passages describing the coming kingdom. In both cases the context shows that how people treat the name is how they treat the one whose name it is.

Isaiah reports it first:

Isa 29:22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, **they shall sanctify my name**, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall **fear the God of Israel**. 24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

Ezekiel picks up the expression in his promise of the New Covenant and the coming of the Spirit, drawing on the expression "to profane the name" from Leviticus:

Eze 36:16 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. 18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it: 19 And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. 20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned **my holy name**, when they said to them, These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. 21 But I had pity for **mine holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for **mine holy name's** sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23 And I will **sanctify my great name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when **I shall be sanctified** in you before their eyes.

So our prayer for God's name to be sanctified and set apart is really a prayer for the state of affairs that Isaiah and Ezekiel anticipate, when all nations will acknowledge the Lord for who he really is.

Our very first concern in approaching the Lord is thus not for ourselves, but for him. In particular, it is

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a desire that his reputation might be honored by all, that his name would be sanctified, that all nations would recognize him for whom he is. The Westminster divines may have had this petition in mind when they taught that “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Above all, we are to desire that his name would be hallowed.

In this light, the second petition is not for something different, but for the same thing under a different perspective:

### 10 Thy kingdom come

According to Isaiah and Ezekiel, the universal honoring of God is one characteristic of the coming kingdom, and in our second petition we are to ask for the full realization of that kingdom.

We must understand this petition, like the others, in the light of the OT. As we saw in our studies in Isaiah, the concept of the coming kingdom was revealed in a time when the kingdom of Israel was on the verge of being obliterated. God promised that he would raise up a righteous king to replace the apostate kings, and restore Zion, the place which he had long chosen to set his name (Deut 12:11; Psa 78:68) (chart).

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that the mountain of the LORD'S house* shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for **out of Zion** shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem.**

Isa 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3 And **the Gentiles shall come to thy light**, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, **The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.**

This clause in the prayer teaches us that our Lord’s earthly ministry does not mark the full arrival of the kingdom. Both he and John proclaimed that “the kingdom of God is at hand,” but his people are still to pray for its full realization. Luke in particular records the disciples’ misunderstanding in this regard, and our Lord’s correction. As the group made their way to Jerusalem, we read (chart),

Luk 19:11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. ...

After the resurrection, our Lord continued to emphasize that the kingdom was not theirs to implement and execute, but awaited a future divine intervention:

Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know



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the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

John on Patmos longed for this day, and prayed, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20). In doing so, he echoed this clause of the Lord’s Prayer, and when we pray it, we are continuing that request.

### Thy will be done

The OT teaches that God already does his will in earth as well as in heaven (chart):

Psa 135:6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.<sup>12</sup>

Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

But God’s creatures do not all seek to do it willingly. A mark of Antichrist is that he does according to his own will:

Dan 11:36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

In fact, doing the will of God is a mark of the true believers in a mixed world:

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Note the relation of doing God’s will to entering the kingdom. All three petitions concern various facets of the coming of the kingdom.

But the implications of praying this prayer are serious. There’s only one other place in the Bible where someone prays, “thy will be done,” and it is our Savior in Gethsemane:

Mat 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

### in earth, as *it is* in heaven

I understand the scope of this clause to include all of the three previous petitions.

His name is honored in heaven, where the heavenly host continuously proclaim,

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

Rev 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

12 Hengstenberg sees this Psalm as composed for the dedication of the second temple, which makes it of the same epoch as Nebuchadnezzar’s confession in Daniel 4.



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From heaven, he rules over all:

2Ch 20:6 O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? (Jehoshaphat)

Dan 4:17 the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

His heavenly angels constantly do his will:

Psa 103:21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers of his, that do his pleasure.  
Ποιωντες το θελημα αυτου<sup>13</sup>

The first set of petitions ask that the conditions of heaven would be realized on earth; that God's name, his rule, and his will would be respected throughout his creation. They are a petition for the repeal of the fall.

### 11-13a, Petitions Concerning Us (Imperative)

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

We consider the words “daily,” “us,” and “bread.”

**Daily**—This Greek word (επιουσιος) appears here for the first time in Greek literature, and its derivation and meaning has been a matter of intense debate ever since the time of Origen (AD 185-254). See the notes for details and references for further reading. We will apply the principle that we should use the Bible to explain itself, rather than relying on extra-biblical knowledge. A very similar word, επιουσα, is widely attested in other Greek literature, including 7 times in the Greek Bible, where it means “the next day.” For example (chart),

Act 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;

This expression does not require a night to intervene; in the morning “the next day” refers to the day then dawning.<sup>14</sup> The adjectival form appearing in the prayer thus means “bread sufficient for the day ahead.” The KJV translation, “daily bread,” is completely appropriate. In the morning, this prayer is a request for that day's bread. Prayed in the evening, it is a request for provision the next day.

Some have objected to this meaning because it is thought to conflict with a verse later in the chapter:

Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought [care μεριμναω] for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

But in fact the context of Matt 6:34 forbids us to take thought for food at all.<sup>15</sup>

Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought [care μεριμναω] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink;

13 Carmignac documents how γινομαι, the verb in Matt 6:10, is regularly used as the passive of ποτω.

14 Lightfoot observes that επιουσα “implies time *approaching*,” while ωριον implies “time *deferred*.”

15 The argument here is due to Lightfoot in the appendix to his *On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament*.

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Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought μεριμνάω, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink?

So if the command not to worry about tomorrow forbids us to pray for the next day's food, the previous verses forbid us to pray for any food at all.

In fact, one purpose of prayer is to do away with our cares:

1Pe 5:7 Casting all your care μεριμνά upon him; for he careth for you.

Phi 4:6 Be careful μεριμνάω for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

So we are instructed to pray to the Lord for the sustenance we need for the day ahead. But we should not miss the force of “daily”: we are *not* authorized to pray for our sustenance for next week, or next year, or our retirement. God promises to give us each day, what we need for that day. The spirit of the request is that of Agur,

Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

What about the example of the ant in Proverbs,

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest.

Will not this focus on only daily bread lead to lack of diligence? Our Lord makes this clear later in the chapter. He is all for working diligently to lay up in store—but our focus is to be on a heavenly store rather than an earthly one.

Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The promise of daily provision is not meant to allow us to slack off. Rather, it lets us focus our efforts on the things that matter, working diligently to lay up treasure in heaven.

**Us**—We have seen that the prayer is intended for our corporate use, and it is interesting to consider the implications of the plural here. In matters of material well-being, our focus should not be on ourselves individually, but on the body of which we are a part. When we pray together, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are praying as a group, for the Lord's provision to the group. If one member of the group is in need, has the Lord failed his promise? Not if some other member has enough to share with the needy one. If together we have enough, the Lord has provided *our* daily bread, and it is our responsibility to share it among ourselves.

We see this dynamic several times in the NT. There are several indications that life was hard for some believers in Jerusalem (chart). We see two instances of steps within the church to address this problem:

Act 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things

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common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Act 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

The church in Antioch also helped relieve the need in Jerusalem:

Act 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Finally, throughout Paul's missionary journeys, he was collecting gifts from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 encourage the Corinthians to match the generosity of the churches in Macedonia, and Paul summarizes his fund-raising campaign,

Rom 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

When we pray as a group for God's provision, we must always remember that he will provide for us as a group, but that may require some of us to recognize his bounty to us as in trust for others who are more needy.

**Bread**—Finally, consider what it is for which we pray. Certainly, we are praying for the Lord's physical provision. But we should not forget our Lord's temptation, which Matthew records just two chapters earlier, in which, in a time of fasting, he quotes Deut 8:3 (chart),

Mat 4:4 It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This theme that we require God's word as well as physical food to nourish us pervades the Scriptures.

Job 23:12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the **words of his mouth more than my necessary food**.

Psa 19:10 More to be desired are **they** [God's judgments] than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than **honey and the honeycomb**.

Psa 119:103 How sweet are **thy words** unto my taste! yea, sweeter than **honey** to my mouth!

Jer 15:16 **Thy words were found, and I did eat them**; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

1Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the **sincere milk of the word**, that ye may grow thereby:

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A prophecy of Amos is particularly revealing in this regard. Amos prophesied about 760 BC, just before Isaiah, but with a focus in Israel rather than Judah. He points out the impatience of the people with even the corrupt religious practices of the Northern Kingdom:

Amo 8:4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5 Saying, **When will the new moon be gone**, that we may sell corn? **and the sabbath**, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

In a time before printing and private Bibles, the feast days (such as new moons) and sabbaths were critical times for hearing the word of God. But the people despise these opportunities, and as a result, the Lord says,

Amo 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send **a famine** in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but **of hearing the words** of the LORD: 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*.

We must not take our possession of the Scriptures, and our access to sound exposition, for granted. Today, we enjoy great bounty, for which we should give profuse thanks, but in many places our brothers and sisters struggle to gain access to spiritual bread. We should pray that the Lord would give both us and them, both physical access to, and spiritual understanding of, God’s Word.

A popular interpretation among Catholics is that “our daily bread” refers partly, if not mainly, to the Eucharist, the elements served at the Lord’s Table in the breaking of bread. We should value the remembrance highly, following the example of the early church. And in times of persecution, we may well pray for the Lord to enable us to honor his command. But the frequency of this remembrance appears to have been weekly, not daily:

Act 20:7 7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,

And the point of the remembrance is not so much to feed us, as it is to worship and honor the Lord. In fact, Paul’s discouragement of the love feast in Corinth shows that a focus on satisfying our needs is out of place at this particular meeting.

### 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

There are four lessons to learn here:

- Debt: The nature of sin (as a debt, embracing omission as well as transgression)
- Forgive: The persistence of sin (this is a prayer for justified believers)
- Us, our: The corporate aspect of sin
- As: The condition of asking for forgiveness.

**Debts**—Paul recognizes two categories of sin, summarized in Rom 7:19 (Table 5, chart)

Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not:

For the good that I would I do not:	Sin of Omission	Debt
but the evil which I would not, that I do.	Sin of Commission	Transgression, Trespass

}

Sin *αμαρτια*  
“miss the mark”

*Table 5: Two kinds of sin in Rom 7:19*

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but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Theologians call the first failing, a “sin of omission,” and the second, a “sin of commission,” or “transgression.” The word “debt” focuses our attention on what theologians call “sins of omission,” things we owe God but do not perform. (The version of the prayer that asks forgiveness for “trespasses” imports the word from the Lord’s commentary in v. 14, and thus focuses on sins of commission. The “trespasses” version is well known because it is the version that appears in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and is used in Catholic services, but the Lord’s emphasis is on sins of omission.)

Debts are harder to avoid than trespasses. One can imagine enumerating the prohibited deeds and avoiding them, but our debts to God are uncountable. And the more we grow in Christ, the more of his blessing we recognize, and the greater our debt to him becomes.

Jam 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

**Forgive**—The Lord instructs his disciples to ask for forgiveness. In the early centuries of the church, this part of the prayer was cited to show that believers would not reach a state of “sinless perfection,” for then they could not pray this prayer.

Why would believers need to be forgiven? Aren’t we already forgiven when we trust in the Lord?

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

As we continually encounter sin during our pilgrimage, we need to come to the Lord for cleansing. In his first epistle, John writes to those who “are of God” (4:4) and “have eternal life” (5:13), yet he insists that sin still dogs our steps:

1Jo 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ... 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Recall the Lord’s words to Peter when he washed the disciples’ feet:

Joh 13:10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

**Us**—Again, the Lord reminds us that this as a corporate prayer. We usually think of sin as an individual matter, between the believer and the Lord, and are offended if someone else in our assembly calls our attention to an offense. Modern evangelicals split hairs on points of doctrine, but pride themselves in overlooking differences in practice, which are considered matters of “personal conviction.”

In fact, God holds the community responsible for the sins of individuals. Perhaps the most prominent example is the sin of Achan in Joshua 7. One man disobeyed the Lord’s command to destroy everything from Jericho, but God held the entire nation accountable (chart):

Jos 7:11 **Israel hath sinned**, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put *it* even among their own stuff. 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not

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stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

But OT saints repeatedly acknowledge that they are affected by the sins of others:

When Ezra learns of the mixed marriages in Jerusalem, he prays,

Ezr 9:6 O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for **our iniquities** are increased over *our* head, and **our trespass** is grown up unto the heavens.

Daniel, recalling the sins of the previous generations, for which Israel was sent into captivity, prays:

Dan 9:5 **We have sinned**, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

Nehemiah, learning of the desolate state of Jerusalem, prays,

Neh 1:7 **We** have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

How different the attitude of these saints is from that of the Pharisee in Luke 18, who feels secure in his own righteousness, and is even encouraged by the contrast with others:

Luke 18:11 God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men [are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

The NT also emphasizes the corporate impact of individual sin (chart). In Acts 4, the church prays for boldness on their part and signs and wonders on God's part, and the boldness comes immediately:

Act 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all **boldness** they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to **heal**; and that **signs and wonders** may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with **boldness**.

But the healing, signs and wonders don't appear until later in ch. 5,

Act 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many **signs and wonders** wrought among the people; ... 16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were **healed** every one.

What held up God's action? The answer is found in the intervening verses. To relieve the poorer brethren, many in the church sold their property and gave the proceeds to the apostles for relief. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to share their property in the same way, but in fact kept back part of the proceeds. They alone sinned, but the church as a whole was held back until their sin was dealt with.

Thus Paul in 1 Cor 5:13 urges the church to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." And in 11:29, he warns of "not discerning διακρινω the Lord's body," going on to say,

1Co 11:31 For if we would judge διακρινω ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.



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*Application:* Our individual sins affect the local body. Contrary to modern evangelical opinion, our personal practice is not a matter of individual conviction alone. We have a responsibility to exhort and encourage one another to godliness, to bring loving correction when we see another in sin, and to be open ourselves to receive correction. And when we come together to the Lord in prayer, we should take responsibility for one another's conduct, as we ask, "Forgive **us our** sins."

**As we**—This clause is one of the main reasons that many dispensationalists believe the Lord's Prayer is not for this age, and explains the relative neglect of the prayer in many evangelical and Bible churches. Scofield comments on this verse,

This is legal ground. Cf. Ephesians 4:32 which is grace. Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ's sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven.

The verse he cites is

Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

At first glance, there does seem to be a tension between asking for forgiveness motivated by our forgiveness of others, and forgiving others as God has forgiven us. In Ephesians, God's forgiveness comes first, while in Matthew, we claim to have forgiven others at the moment we come seeking God's forgiveness.<sup>16</sup> But if Eph 4:32 is in tension with Matthew, it is also in tension with John, whom Scofield would never accuse of being on "legal ground," since 1 John 1:9 teaches those who already "are of God" and "have eternal life" (5:13) still need to confess their sin, in order to find forgiveness. If we, as God's redeemed children, contemplate our need for cleansing, we surely must be willing to forgive our enemies before we can come to the Lord to ask for his forgiveness.

We can't expect the Lord to wash our feet while we're still standing in the mud!

Once again, pay attention to the plural. Just as the assembly can be collectively guilty, so it has a collective role in forgiveness. An example of this is the fornicator in Corinth. In his first epistle, consistent with our corporate responsibility for sin, Paul enjoins the church to deal with this man:

1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

But in his second epistle, having heard of the man's repentance, he urges them to restore him in love:

2Co 2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6 Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many. 7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would

<sup>16</sup> I follow the MT in reading the present, as also does Tholuck. Metzger's committee was divided, though the majority preferred the aorist. Regardless of the reading, Carmignac cites 6:14-15; 18:35; 5:23-24 in support of the priority of forgiving others over asking for forgiveness ourselves.

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confirm *your* love toward him.

It is good for the church to deal with sin in its midst. It is bad if this discipline turns into persistent animosity even after people repent of their sin. We must recognize and deal with sin; we must also be quick to forgive and show positive love to those who confess their sin and repent of it.

### 13 And lead us not into temptation,

This is perhaps the most perplexing petition in the prayer. James, who shows an intimate knowledge of the Sermon, clearly teaches (chart),

Jam 1:13 God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Leading people into sin is the work of Satan. How could we imagine that God would ever do such a thing? Do we need to ask God to abstain from something so foreign to his character? Would not such a request be offensive to him?

Many solutions have been proposed,<sup>17</sup> but the most convincing<sup>18</sup> rests on several observations about the vocabulary and grammar of the verse. These depend on recognizing that “lead us not into temptation” can be decomposed, in terms of its meaning, into three parts:

1. The basic verbal action in view is “enter into temptation.”
2. That action is transformed causally, “cause to go into temptation.”
3. Then the request is negated.

Confusion about the meaning of the request concerns whether the negation applies to the notion of causality, or to the basic action of entering into temptation. Traditional translations assume that it applies to the causality: “Do not cause us to enter.” But we’ll see that the negation can be restricted to the basic verbal action, leading to the interpretation, “Cause that we shall not enter.” Let’s consider each of the three parts in turn.

The idea of “go into temptation” is clearly defined elsewhere in Matthew, in the account of the Garden of Gethsemane, when the Lord tells the disciples (chart),

Mat 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye **enter not into temptation**: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. = Luke 22:40

The context in Luke 22 shows that the Lord anticipated their prayer with his own, at least for Peter:

Luk 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:

The Lord’s prayer for Peter shows two things about Peter’s situation:

1. What is at issue is temptation to sin, not simply a test that is expected to lead to approval (as in

17 Carmignac notes six main classes, all motivated more theologically than philologically: 1) add a gloss, “lead us not into such temptation as might overpower us”; 2) understand “temptation” as “test, proof” rather than “temptation to evil”; 3) replace the active verb with a passive; 4) weaken the verb to a permissive sense; 5) combine 3 and 4; 6) understand the verb as “abandon.”

18 Due originally to J. Heller (*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 25 (1901) 85-93, developed by J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le Notre Père*, 1969.

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Gen 22) (though the same event can have both effects).

2. The Lord does not pray for Peter to avoid being tempted, but that he would not succumb. We expect him to exhort Peter to join in this prayer, rather than to pray for something different.

The Lord exhorts them to pray along similar lines. The prayer he prescribes for them is not that they would avoid the experience of temptation, but that they would not “enter into” it. They have already come up to the edge of the pit; they are to pray that they would not succumb to it.

Their failure to watch and pray explains why they later sinned so grievously. All but Peter and John deserted the Lord, and Peter denied him. The first insight is that the basic action in view, “enter into temptation,” means to sin.

Turning the verb into a causative adds a second action, and a second subject, to the sentence (Table 6, chart). Matt 26:41 speaks of their entering into temptation; 6:13 speaks of God’s causing them to enter into temptation. The two actions are causing (of which God is the subject), and entering (of which the disciples are still the subject).

Simple	Complex	Causal Analysis
John dies	George kills John	George causes (John dies)
John eats	George feeds John	George causes (John eats)
John goes	George leads John	George causes (John goes)

*Table 6: Adding causality to a verbal notion*

That causal sense is what leads to such offense and confusion, and our deeper understanding of “enter into temptation” only intensifies our confusion. If we could understand “temptation” as a test rather than a temptation to evil, we might be a little more comfortable (though the petition would then contradict the teaching of Heb 12 that “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth”). But since “enter into temptation” means “fall into sin,” are we now saying that the Lord could possibly “cause us to enter into temptation,” that is, fall into sin?

Critically, our Lord negates the causal. In doing so, he introduces an ambiguity that is not obvious in western languages, but is frequently attested in Hebrew and Aramaic. In all likelihood, our Lord gave the prayer in Hebrew (or less likely, in Aramaic), of which our text is a translation.

Recall that a causal sentence has two actions: the original action (“enter in”), and the causation (chart). In Hebrew, if one negates the command, “do not cause me to do X,” the negation may apply to either of the actions. In particular, it might apply only to the effect. A good example is when David is charging Solomon how to deal with certain people in his kingdom. Concerning Joab, he says,

1Ki 2:6 let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

The Hebrew reads literally, “Do not cause his hoar head to go down to the grave in peace.” The negative does not apply to the causation. David does not want Solomon to keep Joab alive; he is advising Solomon to see that he dies violently. The negation applies to the effect; we might better translate, “See to it that his hoar head does not go down to the grave in peace.” And that is how Solomon understood David:

1Ki 2:31 And the king said unto [Benaiah], ... Fall upon [Joab], and bury him; that thou mayest

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take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. ...  
34 So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him:

This is not an isolated example. Carmignac has identified 28 cases of this idiom in the OT.

When we recognize this effect in the Lord's Prayer, it makes a huge difference. Now the sixth petition is not about whether or not God brings us into temptation and sin. Rather, we can understand it, "Cause that we do not succumb to temptation." It is a prayer for God to strengthen us in the hour of temptation and provide a way for us to avoid falling, or as Paul says,

1Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Jude also reflects this insight:

Jud 1:24 Now unto him that is **able to keep you from falling**, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

**but deliver ρουμαι us from απο evil:**<sup>19</sup>

Literally, the Lord's words are, "deliver us from **the** evil," as in 5:37, 39 What is "the evil" from which we to pray to be delivered? I suggest that it is evil people, who persecute the righteous during this present age.

That was the meaning that fit best in those earlier passages (chart):

Mat 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

That is, evil people feel the need to bolster their statements by oaths; don't be like them.

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

That is, resist not the evil person who abuses you; cf. James' allusion to this verse,

Jam 5:6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

As we saw earlier, this is also a common use of the expression in Deuteronomy, where "put away the evil from among you" refers to putting away a wicked person. It is also how the expression "deliver ... from evil" is used in the LXX, once in the canonical books, once in the apocrypha, and once in a passage in Isaiah that appears to represent an alternative Hebrew text:

Psa 140:1 Deliver me, O LORD, **from the evil** man: **preserve** me from the violent man;

Pss 12:1 Lord, **save** my soul **from** the lawless and **wicked** man, from the lawless and slandering tongue that speaks lies and treacheries. (Psalms of Solomon, apocryphal)

Isa 25:4 LXX<sup>20</sup> For thou hast been a helper to every lowly city, and a shelter to them that were

<sup>19</sup> On the articular use of πονηρος, see the extensive note on 5:37.

<sup>20</sup> This Greek does not correspond clearly to the Hebrew, but does show how ρουμαι απο πονηρος was understood.

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disheartened by reason of poverty: thou shalt **deliver** them **from wicked** men: *thou hast been* a shelter of them that thirst, and a refreshing air to injured men. (rather different from Hebrew)

Paul in 2 Tim, facing opposition in his final trial, appears to allude to the prayer in discussing those who have betrayed or abandoned him (chart):

2Ti 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. 16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. 17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord shall **deliver**  $\rho\upsilon\omicron\mu\alpha$  me **from**  $\alpha\pi\omicron$  every **evil** work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

He refers to evil works, but these are clearly the works of the people mentioned in the previous verses.

So it makes sense to understand the request in the climate anticipated by 5:10-12, when our adversaries will seek to deprive us and drive us to sin. In our current news, we read of Christians being driven from their homes and livelihoods, forced to trust in God for their daily bread. We read of people being forced at gunpoint to deny Christ, tempted most sorely to succumb to temptation. Under such stress, it would be easy for Christians to become bitter and suspicious against each other, needing to remind themselves to forgive their debtors. This final petition is thus a capstone on the second group of three, which lead us to God's throne for the strength we need in the period before the kingdom arrives, while Satan is yet "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). It anticipates Paul's instruction in 1 Tim 2,

1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

### 13b, Doxology (Declarative)

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**--We consider the status of this doxology in the text, its place in the structure of the prayer, and its meaning.

#### The Textual Status of the Doxology (chart)

No modern translation includes this doxology, because it is lacking in the oldest manuscripts. But it is clearly the majority tradition, attested in manuscripts going back to the sixth century, and in other citations even earlier (the Didache in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century). In addition, several allusions to the themes of the prayer later in the NT close with a doxology, suggesting that the writers know the prayer in this form. The notes list nine passages that may be such echoes; here are four of them (chart):

Hallowed be thy name:

1Pe 4:11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: **that God in all things may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, **to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.** Amen.

Thy kingdom come:

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1Ti 6:15-16 he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only **Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords**; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: **to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.**

Lead us not into temptation:

Jud 1:24-25 Now unto him that is able to **keep you from falling**, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 **To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.** Amen.

**David commissions the temple:**

1Ch 29:11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the **power**, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; thine is the **kingdom**, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and **honour** come of thee, and thou reignest over all;

**Solomon dedicates the temple:**

1 Kings 8:30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49, hear thou **in heaven** thy dwelling place.

The Lord's Prayer, Matt 6:9-13

*Opening description of God*  
Our Father, which art **in heaven**

*Petitions for God's Kingdom*

Hallowed be thy name  
10 Thy kingdom come  
Thy will be done

In earth, as it is in heaven

*Petitions for God's Power*

11 Give us this day our daily bread  
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors  
13 And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

*Closing description of God*  
13c For thine is the **kingdom**, and the **power**, and the **glory**, forever.

Deliver us from the evil:

2Ti 4:18 And the Lord shall **deliver *σομαι* me from every evil work**, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: **to whom *be* glory for ever and ever.** Amen.

*Illustration 3: A Prayer for the Spiritual Temple of God*

In fact, every doxology that appears later in the NT concludes a theme that is attested in the prayer (see notes).

See the notes for further discussion of its authenticity. As part of the massive majority of manuscripts, we consider it part of the text.

### The Structural Role of the Doxology (chart)

The doxology closely resembles David's prayer when he delivered to Solomon the materials for the temple. It contains all three of the ascriptions in the doxology, βασιλεια and δυναμις in v. 11, and δοξα in v. 12.

1Ch 29:10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the **power**, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; thine is the **kingdom**, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and **honour** come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

The opening declaration of the Lord's Prayer, invoking God's throne in heaven, recalls Solomon's



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prayer at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8, and led to our suggestion that the Lord's Prayer can be viewed as setting apart the assembly, by which it is to be prayed, as the NT counterpart of the temple. The similarity of the closing declaration to 1 Chronicles 29 brings our minds back to the temple, when David set apart the materials for its construction. The frame of the prayer thus reinforces the corporate nature of the prayer (Illustration 3, chart), reminding those who pray that though they no longer have a physical temple in which to pray, they enjoy the same access to God as did those for whom David and Solomon provided such a temple.

### The Meaning of the Doxology

The doxology declares that three things belong to God: the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

We have already observed that the petitions fall into two groups: those that ask for the fulfillment of the kingdom, and those that seek God's provision in the face of "the evil [man]." The first two ascriptions deal with these two themes.

- It is right that we should pray for the realization of the kingdom, because it is his, and the current challenges to his rule that we see around us are only at his permission.
- It is effective for us to pray for his protection from persecution because he has all power.

The ascription of "glory" then becomes a summary of the doxology, and thus of the entire prayer. Notably, this is the only term of the doxology that is echoed in later doxologies in the NT. The ultimate purpose of both sets of petitions, those for God's kingdom and those for our protection, is that he might be glorified.

Dave has suggested that these three terms may also recall our Lord's temptation, where Satan tempted him to display his power in turning stones into bread, to claim his kingdom by worshiping Satan, and to manifest his glory by forcing angels to bear him into the temple courts. But our Lord refused to usurp the Father's prerogatives in these areas, and now he instructs his disciples to be careful to recognize that these privileges belong to the Lord.

### 14-15, Warning about Forgiveness

**14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**--Before returning to the background theme of the privacy of our duties to God, the Lord returns to one of the themes raised in the prayer, that our requests for forgiveness must be accompanied with forgiveness on our part toward others.

He changes the term for sin, from "debts" (emphasizing sins of omission) to "trespasses" (emphasizing sins of commission, presumably easier to avoid). This would be strange if he were simply amplifying the fifth petition. The caution here has a broader application (chart). In chapter 18, the Lord instructs his disciples on the need for forgiveness. This instruction begins with a detailed protocol for dealing with offenses between believers. Note the use of the word "trespass."

Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall **trespass** against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear

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*thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

As a result of this instruction, Peter asks him,

Mat 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

The Lord responds by telling a parable about a great lord who forgives his servants their debts, only to have one of those servants enforce a much lesser debt on one of his debtors. When he hears of the servant's ingratitude, he condemns him to a worse punishment than the one to which he was originally liable. He concludes, again using the word "trespass,"

Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their **trespasses**.

So far, we can see a clear link between the amplification in ch. 6 and the lessons about forgiveness in ch. 18. But there is one more detail. In Ch. 18, between the Lord's protocol for reconciliation and Peter's question, he promises the disciples the power of corporate prayer:

Mat 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

We need to forgive one another, not just because the Lord tells us to, but because it is a critical condition for gathering together in prayer. We cannot "agree on earth" about our petitions to heaven if we are not agreed on earth about other things, specifically our relation with one another. The exhortation to forgiveness is not just about obtaining forgiveness from God. It is about ensuring our access to him in corporate prayer, ensuring that we as a church remain in close communication with our heavenly Father. Bitterness among believers blocks our communion with God.

### 16-18, Fasting<sup>21</sup>

Now we return to the backbone of the section, which highlights the danger that acts conducted to honor God will become perverted to feed personal pride.

**16 Moreover when ye fast,**--The plural pronoun here is at variance with the singular pronouns in the first two sections of the backbone (6:2 "when thou doest alms," 6:5 "when thou prayest"). But v. 17 immediately returns to the singular. This is an instance of a common transitional technique, in which a feature that is characteristic of one body of text is continued at the extremity of the next one.<sup>22</sup>

Fasting is not something widely practiced in evangelical circles. But it is commanded in the law, as part of the day of atonement:

21 See notes for extensive discussion of fasting.

22 This transition shows that the section on corporate prayer was part of the original composition of 6:1-18, not a later, intrusive addition.

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Lev 16:29 And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall **afflict your souls**, and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

To “afflict the soul” means “to fast”: compare

Psa 35:13 **I humbled [afflicted] my soul with fasting**; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Isa 58:3 Wherefore have we **fasted**, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we **afflicted our soul**, and thou takest no knowledge?

The term “afflict the soul” refers to the natural origin of fasting. When one is emotionally distraught, it’s easy to neglect to eat, a reaction that we see numerous times in Scripture, for example,

1Sa 1:7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, **and did not eat**.

1Sa 20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and **did eat no meat** the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

When we start with the natural origin of fasting in deep emotional distress, it’s clear that we shouldn’t equate fasting with a selective diet. Abstaining from meat on Fridays, or from any animal protein during Lent, is not a fast, though these practices are often called fasts by ecclesiastical organizations. Fasting is abstention from all food, the kind of behavior that we see when someone is overwhelmed with sorrow.

Deliberate fasting should be a reflection of this deep emotional engagement. Believers in the NT sometimes fast, when they face major decisions, showing their complete commitment to the issue at hand:

Act 13:2-3 As they ministered to the Lord, **and fasted**, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Act 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed **with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Paul contemplates that a married couple may suspend their relations for the purpose of prayer and fasting:

1Co 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to **fasting** and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Today, fasting among Christians takes two directions.

- In liturgical churches, it is a partial abstention at specific seasons, for example, giving up meat for Lent. Nowhere does Scripture call such selective eating, “fasting.” Fasting is not eating at all.
- Among evangelicals, it is neglected almost completely.

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The latter situation ought to concern us, in view of our Lord's assumption that we will fast, and the practice of the early church. Perhaps the reason we don't fast is that we aren't really engaged enough emotionally. If we were, we would make more frequent use of the instructions of this paragraph.

**be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.**--As in the other two contrasts with the hypocrites, the Lord condemns doing the practice for the sake of approval by people.

The Lord's warning about "disfigur[ing] their faces" would seem to condemn practices such as the Catholic custom of putting ashes on the forehead to mark the beginning of the Lenten fast. Such practices are at risk of drawing attention to the worshipper, which the Lord condemns.

Isaiah early recognized the danger of fasting being done for the wrong reason, as a way to control God rather than to express their own sorrow (chart):

Isa 58:2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

Zech 7:4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?

**17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;**--Because of the risk of intruding pride, the believer should not give any evidence to others of fasting. The point is not to show other people how miserable we are. It is to humble ourselves before God.

**18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.**--And he promises to reward those who do follow this discipline.

We should note two things about fasting.

- Fasting is intimately coupled to an attitude of emotional engagement, whether as a natural result of stress, or as a means for bringing the mind into such an attitude. The Lord condemns it if it is severed from such a spirit of concentration, as in Isaiah.
- Fasting is not just an old covenant activity, but should be part of our practice when we are

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making major decisions, such as appointing church elders.

Our failure to fast shows a lack of deep emotional engagement with the spiritual issues with which we are engaged.

To complete our survey of fasting, we should note that when the Kingdom of God comes in its fulness, there will be no more place for fasting (chart).

Zec 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. 20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: 21 And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

John, referring to Isa 25:8, anticipates a time when there is no more sorrow, and thus no more need for fasting:

Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

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### Notes

#### v. 1 ελεημοσυνη vs. δικαιοσυνη

Instances of δικαιοσυνη συ/υμων as object of ποιω

Gen 19:19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified **thy mercy** **יְרַחֵם**, which thou hast **shewed** unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

Gen 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This *is* **thy kindness** **יְרַחֵם** which thou shalt **shew** unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He *is* my brother.

Both times LXX δικαιοσυνη = **יְרַחֵם**

ελεημοσυνη συ/υμων as object of ποιω does not occur. Lacking the possessive, we have ποιω ελεημοσυνην twice in the canonical books, representing **יְרַחֵם** and **הִקְדִּיף** once each:

Gen 47:29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and **deal kindly** **יְרַחֵם** **וְשָׂא** and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

Psa 103:6 The LORD **executeth righteousness** **הִקְדִּיף** **וְשָׂא** and judgment for all that are oppressed.

In fact, the only use of ελεημοσυνη in the canonical LXX that might be limited to alms is in the Dan 4:27, “break off thy sins by **righteousness**, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor,” but even there the second clause (as often in parallelism) may be understood as a specialization of the first, and not as an equivalent.

	<b>יְרַחֵם</b>	<b>הִקְדִּיף</b>
δικαιοσυνη	9	135
δικαιος	1	5
ελεημοσυνη	6	8
ελεος	202	3
πολυελεος	10	
ελεημων	2	

Thus canonically ποιω ελεημοσυνην does not refer to alms, but it is the standard expression for almsgiving in the intertestamental Greek (15x in Tobit, 3x in Sirach). However, Tobit is not shy about his almsgiving:

Tob 1:3 I Tobit have walked all the days of my life in the ways of truth and justice, and I did many almsdeeds to my brethren, and my nation, who came with me to Nineve, into the land of



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the Assyrians.

Possible explanations for the MT reading:

- In general, there is considerable crosstalk between these. In particular, ελεημοσσυνη more often translates צדקה than חסד. Perhaps the switch is due to confusion at the Semitic level, if our Lord's saying were preserved in Hebrew and only later translated into Greek.
- More likely, we have two subtly different senses of ελεημοσσυνη, reflected in the contrast between the canonical usage and that in Tobit and Sirach. In v. 1, the word has the general sense, while in 2-4 the focus shifts to the specific good deed of almsgiving.

### Reward

Matt 6:1-16 contains four of the 29 instances of this word in the NT. (The English term in vv. 4, 6, 18 “reward thee openly” is from a different root, αποδοιδωμι.) Matthew uses it 12x; Paul is next, at 6. It is sometimes translated “wages,” and indeed this is the basic sense in most Greek literature.

	שכר	משכרת	שוב C, C-	מכר	שלם	נתן	פקד
μισθος	29	4					
αποδοιδωμι			55	40	22	21	3

Key features:

- rewarded for works. The word is especially prominent in Genesis, in the description of the relation between Laban and Jacob. God's wages to men:

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great **reward**.

Gen 30:18 And Leah said, God hath given me my **hire**, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

Rut 2:12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full **reward** be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Psa 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a **reward** for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Pro 11:18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure **reward**.

Mat 5:11-12 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

- works come through attention to the Word of God:

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Psa 1:2-3 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

2Ti 3:16-17 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- The Word of God is only accessible to one controlled by the Spirit:

Gal 5:19-23 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

- The Spirit is a gift of God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ:

Joh 3:5-8 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Joh 7:39 But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive:

1Pe 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

1Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Overall summary: Eph 2:8-10, Titus 3:

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Tit 3:4-8 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not

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by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

### **Blowing the Trumpet**

In general sense of announcement:

1Sa 13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

Associated with sacrifice:

Num 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I *am* the LORD your God.

2Ch 7:6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy *endureth* for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. (Solomon's dedication)

2Ch 29:27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David king of Israel. 2Ch 29:28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and all this continued* until the burnt offering was finished. (Hezekiah)

Psa 81:1-3 Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

### **Hypocrites**

The Greek word ὑποκριτής occurs only 2x in the LXX (Job 34:30; 36:13), both times translating the adjective הַנִּזְרֵם. This word's correspondences are:

	הַנִּזְרֵם adj <sup>23</sup>	רָשָׁע	
ὑποκριτής	2		
ασεβής	5	140	

23 8x Job, 3x Isa, 1x Psa, 1x Prov.

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ανομος	2	31	
παρανομος	2		
Other (δολος, και)	2		

Given this distribution, we can't rely on the LXX for the meaning. The word is almost entirely Matthew's (15x; 1x Mark, 4x Luke), is always spoken by the Lord, and almost always describes the scribes and the Pharisees. In this situation, we have to turn to pagan Greek for the meaning, and there we find that the word refers almost entirely to an actor on the stage.<sup>24</sup>

### **εχω παρα**

Is the preposition to be understood in the sense of “from,” or “with”? In the latter case, the reference to heaven is even more parallel with 5:20 than in the KJV. Other instances of the construction:

BGT 1 Esdras 6:5 και ἔσχοσαν χάριν ἐπισκοπῆς γενομένης ἐπὶ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τῶν Ἰουδαίων

BGT Proverbs 27:27 υἱέ παρ' ἐμοῦ ἔχεις ῥήσεις ἰσχυρὰς εἰς τὴν ζωὴν σου καὶ εἰς τὴν ζωὴν σῶν θεραπόντων

BGT Matthew 6:1 Προσέχετε [δὲ] τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

BGT John 17:5 καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί.

BGT Acts 9:14 καὶ ᾧδε ἔχει ἐξουσίαν παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων δῆσαι πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους τὸ ὄνομά σου.

### **Structure of the Lord's Prayer**

Several points of discussion:

- the originality of the closing benediction
- the scope of “as in heaven, so on earth”
- whether there are three or four petitions in the second (manward) half
- whether “the evil” from which we ask to be delivered is personal (“the Evil One”) or impersonal

A highly symmetric view of the prayer resolves all of these.

1. Benediction corresponds to the opening; indicative frame for imperative prayer
2. Evidence earlier for “the evil” as other than Satan; then it could be a summary of the three

<sup>24</sup> “the nomen agentis ὑποκριτής, ... almost always means ‘actor’”, Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.). (1964–). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

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manward petitions, corresponding to the summary of the three Godward petitions.

Overall structure would then be A, B, C, B, C, A, where

- A = indicative frame
- B = three detailed petitions
- C = summary of the petitions

Problem: ο πονηρος in Matthew appears always to be either Satan or the evil man, not the principle (as ערף often is in the OT). But even if this is a reference to Satan, it still could be understood as contrasting to all of the previous three, not just to the last.

Comparison with Luke:

<p>Mat 6:9-13 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as <i>it is</i> in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.</p>	<p>Luk 11:2-4 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.</p>
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### God's Will θελημα

Translates רצון (as in Psa 103:21) 9x, but חפץ 20 times (+ once חפצי).

	רצון	רצה	חפץ n	חפץ v	עצה <sup>25</sup>	ישר	שררות	טוב	אבה	מאן
θελημα	9		20							
θελω				46						
βουλη					74					
βουλομαι				25					17	10
Δεκτος	22	4								
Ευδοκια	7									
Ευδοκεω		22								
αρεστος	3					7	3	2		

25 Advice, counsel, plan

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### v. 11 **ΕΠΙΟΥΣΙΟΣ**

This word appears first in Greek literature in the prayer, so usage cannot guide us in its meaning. The alternative derivations, either from *ἐπι + ἔλθαι* “to come” or from *ἐπι + οὐσία* “substantial,” have occupied scholars since Origen. See Tholuck, Thirtle, and Alford for able defenses of the derivation from *οὐσία*, which seem to rely most strongly on avoiding a conflict from 6:34. Lightfoot’s appendix to his book *On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament* is an exhaustive argument in favor of *ἔλθαι*, and he observes that if 6:34 is a problem for *ἔλθαι*, the context is a problem for any reading, since vv. 25, 31 forbid giving thought to food at all.

All of these arguments presume extrabiblical knowledge. A reader of the Greek Bible who wondered what the word meant would naturally be drawn to the much better attested participle of *ἐπιέναι*, *ἐπιούσα*, which appears twice in Proverbs and five times in Acts, clearly meaning “the next day.” Lightfoot points out that the reference of the word, as attested in Greek literature, is not strictly to the day that follows the next night, but to the day immediately ahead, which in the morning would be the current day, and in the evening the next day. “Daily” is thus a very reasonable rendering; we are to ask for provision sufficient for our immediate need, and not seek a superabundance.

### **Categories of Sin**

The language of the prayer leads us to consider the categories of sin that Paul summarizes in Rom 7:19, omission (debts) vs. commission (transgression). Another categorization (Num 15:22-31) is between sins of ignorance and presumptuous sins (“with a high hand”), that is, between sins into which we accidentally stumble and those that we deliberately commit. This classification appears to be extended in 1 John 1:

Num 15	1 John, description and remedy	
v. 30 presumptuous	1:6, walk in darkness	1:7, walk in the light
v. 27, ignorant	1:8, sin of which we become aware	1:9, confession
(lacking)	1:10, sin absolutely—the residue of which we are not aware	2:1-2, the intercession of our Advocate

The two schemes appear to be orthogonal. Either debts or transgressions can be either deliberate (presumptuous) or accidental (discovered after the fact).

### **Doxology**

The Doxology is omitted in all new translations as a secondary textual accretion. It is missing in Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4<sup>th</sup> century) and D (5<sup>th</sup> century). Its earliest appearance is in the 6<sup>th</sup> century mss f and q. It is also lacking in the Vulgate and patristic comments. Thus the suggestion that it should be omitted is not recent, but has long been discussed (e.g., by the Lutheran pietist Johann Bengel, ca. 1700, in his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*). In spite of this evidence, it is unquestionably the majority reading, and is traceable to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. According to *The Center for New Testament Textual Studies NT Critical Apparatus*, it also persists longer; though the oldest representatives of the Alexandrian and



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Western text types omit it, it quickly comes to dominate those traditions as well.

### Evidence of the Didache

It is attested in the Didache, which most scholars date to the late first century, but we don't have mss evidence that old.<sup>26</sup> The only surviving complete Greek text is Byrennios' Jerusalem Codex, which is 11<sup>th</sup> century. Fragments from about AD 350 are among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus\\_Papyri#New\\_Testament\\_Apocrypha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus_Papyri#New_Testament_Apocrypha)), but these do not include section 8, which is where the prayer (and the doxology) appear.

Some scholars claim the doxology was added to the Didache after it was written, as a result of its putative addition to the NT text, but this is to beg the question. The form in the Didache is not identical with Matthew, making such an addition less likely. In fact, the Didache form differs in a few details throughout:

Matthew	Didache
Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν <b>τοῖς οὐρανοῖς</b> , ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. Γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ <b>τῆς γῆς</b> . Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον. Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν <b>τὰ ὀφειλήματα</b> ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν <b>ἡ βασιλεία καὶ</b> ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. <b>Ἀμήν.</b>	Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν <b>τῷ οὐρανῷ</b> ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ <b>γῆς</b> τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν <b>τὴν ὀφειλὴν</b> ἡμῶν ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν  ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας

### Possible Origin of the Variant in Dictation

Part of the confusion may be due to how such a doxology was commonly used. Originally in Jewish practice, then in churches, it was not typically spoken by the person praying, but as a response by the congregation. This custom may have led to confusion on the part of early scribes, who are familiar with the use of the doxology as a response, and therefore assume that it is not part of the prayer itself. This would particularly be the case if, as Tischendorf suggested,<sup>27</sup> x and B were among the 50 Bibles that

<sup>26</sup> A summary of mss evidence is at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.ii.html>

<sup>27</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifty\\_Bibles\\_of\\_Constantine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifty_Bibles_of_Constantine)

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Constantine ordered, and if, as Skeat has suggested,<sup>28</sup> such a massive order was prepared by dictation to multiple scribes at once. When the reader read the prayer, his reading of the doxology might have been understood by the copyists as his own response to it, which they might well have echoed verbally, rather than as part of the text, which they were to copy.

### Later NT Echoes of the Prayer

The NT frequently contains doxologies. In many cases, these are linked with themes associated with the prayer. The verb in the doxology is usually missing, once (1 Pet 4:11) indicative (like Matt 6:13), but never imperative; we should prefer the indicative rendering throughout (as in David's prayer in 1 Chr 29:10-13).

First petition, "Hallowed be thy name"

1Pe 4:11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: **that God in all things may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Third petition, "Thy kingdom come"

Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen. (*following extensive discussion of Israel's restoration*)

1Ti 1:17 Now unto the **King** eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1Ti 6:15-16 he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only **Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords**; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Second three petitions, for the well-being of the believers:

Rom 16:25 Now to him that is of power **to stablish you** according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 **Make you perfect in every good work to do his will**, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Sixth petition, "Lead us not into temptation"

Jud 1:24-25 Now unto him that is able to **keep you from falling**, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Second summary, deliver us from the evil

28 Milne and Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus*. British Museum, 1938.

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Gal 1:3 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver** **εξαίρω** **us from this present evil world**, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2Ti 4:18 And the Lord shall **deliver** **ρωμαι** **me from every evil work**, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### Elements

Just which details are included in the various doxologies? Here is a summary.

Ref	Μεγαλωσυνη	Δυναμις	Καυχημα	Νικη	Ισχυς	παντων	βασιλεια	Πλουτος	Δοξα	Ισχυς	δυναστεια	Τιμη	Κρατος	Εξουσια
1 Chr 29:11-12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 <sup>29</sup>	8	9	10	11			
Matt 6:13		2					1		3					
Rom 11:36						1								
Rom 16:27									1					
Gal 1:3									1					
1Ti 1:17									2			1		
1Ti 6:16												1	2	
2Ti 4:18									1					
Heb 13:21									1					
1Pet 4:11									1				2	
Jud 1:25	2								1				3	

The only element of the doxology in Matt 6 that is echoed regularly is the ascription of *δοξα*. This selection would be consistent with the hypothesis in the exposition that *βασιλεια* recalls the first three petitions and *δυναμις* the second, with *δοξα* in a summarizing role.

The common introduction of *κρατος* (1 Tim 6:16; 1 Pet 4:11; Jud 25) is interesting. It does not occur in 1 Chr 29 LXX, but its OT reflex is *יָע* (six times), most commonly translated *δυναμις* (22x) and *ισχυς* (32x), often ascribed to God in the OT (though not in 1 Chr 29). So this aspect of the doxology also comes from the OT, but not through David's prayer.

### Conclusion

For our purposes,

- The doxology is firmly part of the majority tradition that the Spirit has preserved.

29 LXX lacks this word. MT includes the phrase, לך יהיה הממלכה, לך יהיה הממלכה. LXX deviates in the second half of the verse, but the usual LXX reflex of ממלכה is βασιλεια.

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- The inclusion of such a doxology by the person praying, rather than simply as a congregational response, is attested by David in 1 Chr 29:10-13.
- Later allusions to the prayer in the NT also echo the doxology.
- Structurally, the inclusion fits very well, corresponding as a closing indicative statement to the opening indicatives that bracket the petitions.

So we expound it as part of the text.

### **Fasting**

Heb צום, Greek vb νηστεω 19, noun νηστεια 25. These are reciprocally dominant and dedicated to each other.

ISBE helpfully distinguishes the natural origin of fasting from its religious significance. We can distinguish natural fasting and deliberate fasting.

Fasting is a natural result of deep emotional preoccupation:

1Sa 1:7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, **and did not eat.**

1Sa 20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and **did eat no meat** the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

1Ki 21:4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and **would eat no bread.**

Ezr 10:6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came thither, **he did eat no bread, nor drink water:** for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.

This natural impulse becomes a deliberate sign of expressing sorrow, and in particular repentance for sin. The expression “afflict one’s soul” ענה נפש, required frequently in the law on the day of atonement (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27, 29, 32; Num 29:7) is understood by the Jews to require fasting and indeed the Day of Atonement is called “the fast” (Acts 27:9). David identifies afflicting the soul with fasting, and shows that it might be done on other occasions as well:

Psa 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: **I humbled my soul with fasting** עניתי בצום נפשי; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Here it becomes a way of showing his seriousness in prayer for his friends who have fallen ill. Now, instead of strong emotion naturally generating abstention from food, fasting becomes a way of showing that sorrow. Num 30:13 also shows the use of the practice as part of a vow to the Lord.

Isaiah also identifies “afflicting the soul” with fasting, but describes a situation where it no longer reflects seriousness of purpose before the Lord:

Isa 58:2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did

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righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

Zechariah also condemns superficial fasting, in connection not only with the day of atonement in the seventh month (Tishri)<sup>30</sup>, but also the ninth of Ab, the fifth month, commemorating the destruction of the temple:

Zec 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 3 *And* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? 4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?

Here, it has become purely a superficial ceremony, uncorrelated with the attitude of the heart, and God rejects it.

In the early church, fasting was part of the devotion of the leaders of the church to the Lord when they sent out Barnabas and Saul:

Act 13:2-3 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Similarly, Saul and Barnabas engaged in it when they appointed elders:

Act 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Paul contemplates that a married couple may suspend their relations for the purpose of prayer and fasting:

30 The fast of the seventh month may refer (Gill) to another fast, one commemorating the murder of Gedaliah, which may also be in view in Zech 8:19. So Zechariah might be referring only to the fasts instituted by the people as a result of the conquest and captivity, not to the Day of Atonement.

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1Co 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Paul twice lists fastings as part of his labors for the church, though they seem more to be the natural consequence of the stressful conditions under which he labored than a specific devotional exercise:

2Co 6:4-5 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

2Co 11:25-28 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Eschatologically, fasting will come to an end. Zechariah, who joins Isaiah in condemning the superficial fasting of the Jews, predicts the end of all the fasts in that time when all nations come to the Lord in Jerusalem:

Zec 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*,<sup>31</sup> and the fast of the fifth,<sup>32</sup> and the fast of the seventh,<sup>33</sup> and the fast of the tenth,<sup>34</sup> shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. 20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: 21 And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

Practical applications:

- There is no evidence that fasting consisted of a selective diet. Abstaining from meat on Fridays, or from any animal protein during Lent, is not a fast, though these practices are often called fasts by ecclesiastical organizations. Fasting is abstention from all food.
- Fasting is intimately coupled to an attitude of emotional engagement, whether as a natural result of stress, or as a means for bringing the mind into such an attitude. The Lord condemns it if it is severed from such a spirit of concentration, as in Isaiah.
- Fasting is not just an old covenant activity, but should be part of our practice when we are making major decisions, such as appointing church elders.

31 The ninth of Tammuz, commemorating the breaking up of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar

32 The ninth of Ab, commemorating the burning of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple

33 The day of atonement on the tenth; also, Gill cites a fast on the third in commemoration of the murder of Gedaliah, which may be more in view here, considering the nature of the other three fasts mentioned.

34 The tenth of Tebet, commemorating the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar



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Our failure to fast shows a lack of deep emotional engagement with the spiritual issues with which we are engaged.