

# Jesus Teaches On Prayer Again

**H**ave you ever wondered why God allows us to pray to Him? Why would a being so incredibly superior, intelligent, wise and knowledgeable want to hear from such inferior, complaining and fearful creatures? Some of us can hardly tolerate listening to each other. Therefore, why should we think that God would want to listen to such immature beings? Some of us complain all the time like some singer who repeats the lyrics over and over again forever. Why would a God who created the universe want to hear from us? Elijah mocked the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27 saying that maybe the reason their god ignored them was that he was occupied with more important things, was on a trip or asleep and needed to be awakened. But our God, Jehovah God, we are told never sleeps nor snoozes (Psalm 121:4). In fact, we are told that our prayers are like sweet incense (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4). That is, He wants to hear from us. That is why we are encouraged to pray to Him always (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). If He did not want to hear from us, He might have encouraged us to pray only at times of crisis. But we have a God who wants to hear from us. Our study about prayer is from Luke 11:1-4.

**JESUS - OUR EXAMPLE OF PRAYER.** The first verse of Luke 11 tells us that time has elapsed since Jesus was in the home of Mary and Martha. We do not know how much time has elapsed or where He is located when we are told that He was praying “in a certain place.”

*Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” Luke 11:1 (NASB)*

While we do not know where Jesus was praying on this occasion, we do know that He prayed often in the morning hours (Mark 1:35), during the day (Luke 9:16, 28) and at night time (Matthew 26:34, 36). That is, He prayed at various times of the day. This reminds us of Ephesians 6:18 which tells us to pray “at all times in the Spirit.” That is, we are to be filled with the Spirit when we pray (Galatians 5:16-23; Ephesians 5:17-18). Sometimes Jesus prayed on



a mountain all night (Matthew 14:23), in secluded places (Mark 1:35; Luke 9:18) and in the wilderness (Luke 5:16). That is, He prayed in different locations. He prayed for food (Luke 9:16), on His face (Matthew 26:39) and often (Luke 5:16). Jesus was constantly praying in different places and for many different things. Jesus is our great example of prayer.

We are told that when He finished praying on one occasion, the disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray just as John the Baptist had taught his disciples. While it would

be interesting to know what John taught his disciples it is more important to read what our Lord Jesus Christ taught. We should be glad that the Holy Spirit did not include John’s teaching in the pages of scripture since some would probably end up in a controversy about the teaching of John versus that of Christ.

The disciples had been watching Jesus pray constantly and finally they wanted to know how to pray. We can be confident that they had been praying since they were children. There-

fore, one might think that this is a strange request. But it reveals that Jesus' prayer life was extraordinary. They had heard Jesus pray on some occasions. They had seen the Pharisees and scribes pray. Jesus tells us that the Pharisees would stand to pray in synagogues and on street corners in order to be seen (Matthew 6:5) and probably heard. But in Matthew 6:6 Jesus says pray in a private place so that you cannot be seen. It appears that is exactly what Jesus did most of the time. He often prayed in private.

In the next verse, Luke 11:2, Jesus will give the disciples a sample prayer. We will discover later that this prayer is very different than the prayer of a Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12.

*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer : "I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income." Luke 11:11-12 (NASB)*

This Pharisee's prayer lacked humility. He claimed that he did not sin. He was arrogant. It is obvious that he thought his external action of giving ten percent of his money was more important than the internal condition of his heart. Most likely this is the type of prayer the disciples were accustomed to hearing from the Pharisees. That was Jesus' message in Luke 18:9-14.

**FATHER - WHO ARE IN HEAVEN.** The prayer that Jesus gave them has two parts. The first part is directed to the Father in heaven and the second part is about us.

*And He said to them, " When you pray, say:*

*Father, hallowed be Your name.*

*Your kingdom come. " Luke 11:2 (NASB)*

The apostle Matthew included more of the words of this recommended prayer in Matthew 6:9-10.

*Pray, then, in this way:*

*"Our Father who is in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Your name.*

*Your kingdom come.*

*Your will be done,*

*On earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10 (NASB)*

This prayer in Matthew is the first time that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. It was part of the Sermon on the Mount. That occurred in the Fall of A.D. 31. Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11:2-4 occurred at a later time in the Summer of A.D. 32. Notice that Luke 6:20-49 records the Sermon on the Mount. Luke 11:2-4 occurs five chapters later and does not include Matthew 6:14-15.

In Matthew we discover that Jesus told the disciples to directly acknowledge that the God they were praying to was the One who existed in heaven. This is significant because both the Old and New Testaments state that there is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:32 and 1 Timothy 2:5 stated that there is only one God (Isaiah 43:10-11). Therefore, Jesus says start your prayer by acknowledging the only true God that exists in heaven. There are no others.

**FATHER - HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.** Then Jesus encourages us to request that the Father's reputation be considered by others to be holy. The Greek word that is translated as holy is *hagiazō*. The word means "to make holy." That is, we are to pray that the Father is believed to be holy in the opinion of others. One way that we can help make this happen is to be holy or godly in our own conduct. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said this,

*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

The apostle John tells us that when we produce much fruit we bring glory to God.

*When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. John 15:8 (NASB)*

The good works are prayers, obedience to God and loving others (John 15:9-17), for example. 2 Corinthians 9:13 and Galatians 1:24 tells us that our behavior brings God glory. The apostle Peter echoes that same truth.

... they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12 (NASB)

Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. 1 Peter 4:11 (NASB)

Therefore, we glorify God when other Christians and non-Christians see our good behavior. We also glorify God before the angels and the demons. The patriarch Job is a great example. The first chapter of the book of Job tells us that Satan came to test God one day (Job 1:6-12). God told Satan that Job “fears God and stays away from evil” (Job 1:8). That sounds great, but Satan objects claiming that Job is acting that way only because God has been good to him. Message - Job is not stupid.

Satan replied to the Lord, “Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!” Job 1:9-11 (NASB)

Satan states that Job is a godly man only because God protects him and makes him prosper. Otherwise, Job would curse God. As long as everything is going great, Job will behave like a good man. Therefore, God lets Satan test him. This is a test of Job and a contest between God and Satan. Then Satan destroys Job’s wealth and kills all of his family,

except his wife. We can be confident that Satan expected Job to curse God. Then Satan would be the winner. He would have been correct. In chapter two, it becomes clear that this was a real contest and Satan lost.

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.” Job 2:2-3 (NASB)

Job brought glory to God by his conduct. This means that our behavior in private and in public can bring glory to God

before people and the angels. Ultimately, when our conduct is the work of the Holy Spirit, our behavior glorifies Him.

**FATHER - YOUR KINGDOM COME.** Then Jesus encourages us to ask that God’s kingdom will come soon! It is obvious that He is not encouraging us to ask for something that

already exists. He is encouraging us to ask for something that will occur in the future. Replacement theologians want us to believe that Jesus is referring to a spiritual kingdom. They do not believe in a rapture of the saints, a seven year tribulation period and a literal earthly 1,000 year kingdom. But that is exactly what Jesus is talking about. For example, in Matthew 25:34 Jesus says that the kingdom has been prepared before the foundation of the world. His message is that it had been prepared, but it did not exist at the time He walked this earth. Luke 19:11 reveals that the disciples thought the kingdom would occur “immediately.” In Mat-



thew 24:4-31 Jesus describes a sequence of events that will occur before His return to earth - His Second Coming! He states that the Abomination of Desolation will occur which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Matthew 24:15). That has not occurred yet. It is a future event. In Acts 1:6-7 the disciples asked Jesus when the kingdom is coming.

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority . . . Acts 1:6-7 (NASB)

Now notice Jesus' reply. He does not tell them that the kingdom began when He died on the cross. He does not tell them it is a spiritual kingdom that already existed as a result of His death on the cross. He does not tell them that there will not be an earthly kingdom. Notice that the disciples asked "Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom of Israel?" The kingdom of Israel had existed before the Babylonian Army invaded and defeated the nation of Israel (605 B.C.). At the time the disciples asked their question, the Roman Empire controlled the land and people of Israel. When they asked, "Restoring the kingdom" they wanted to know when was the nation of Israel going to be re-established. Jesus replied that the kingdom would be coming in the future and only the Father knew when that would occur. Then after Jesus ascended back to heaven, an angel told the disciples that Jesus would return (Acts 1:11). There is a future earthly kingdom.

Jesus says pray the Father's earthly kingdom will come! The kingdom is summarized in Revelation 20:4-6. It is explained in many details in the major and minor prophets as a wonderful time when Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. At the end of the book of Revelation, there is a three word prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). It is the Father's desire that His kingdom come!

**OURSELVES - MEET OUR NEEDS.** Then Jesus told them they should pray,

Give us each day our daily bread. Luke 11:3 (NASB)

Jesus has taught us to focus on the Father first in our prayers and then He teaches us to shift to ourselves. He says that we should ask the Father to meet our daily needs. There is nothing special about the Greek words in this verse, except for the Greek word *epiousion* that is translated as "daily." This word does not appear in any other Greek writings. The early church father Origen states the following,

Let us now consider what the word *epiousion*, needful, means. First of all it should be known that the word *epiousion* is not found in any Greek writer whether in philosophy or in common usage, but seems to have been formed by the evangelists. At least Matthew and Luke, in having given it to the world, concur in using it in identical form.<sup>1</sup>

The major Koine Greek lexicons agree with Origen. For example, Ceslas Spicq agrees with Origen and then states,

Since, therefore, usage is of no help, all that remains is recourse to etymology.<sup>2</sup>

Then he cites the opinion of many early church fathers and concludes the word *epiousion* means "essential": the bread that leads to life.<sup>3</sup> That is, Jesus tells us to pray for the essential food that gives us life. He does not tell us to pray for luxuries. We are to pray for our basic needs.

It is easy for us to think that our government, our employer or even ourselves provide our own food. We work hard and when we receive our paycheck without realizing it we began to think the money we receive is our reward for all our labor. It is true that Jesus did teach us that the laborer is worthy of compensation.

. . . for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Luke 10:7 (NASB)

This teaching is repeated in 1 Timothy 5:18. Yet, scripture teaches that God the Father is the One who makes us

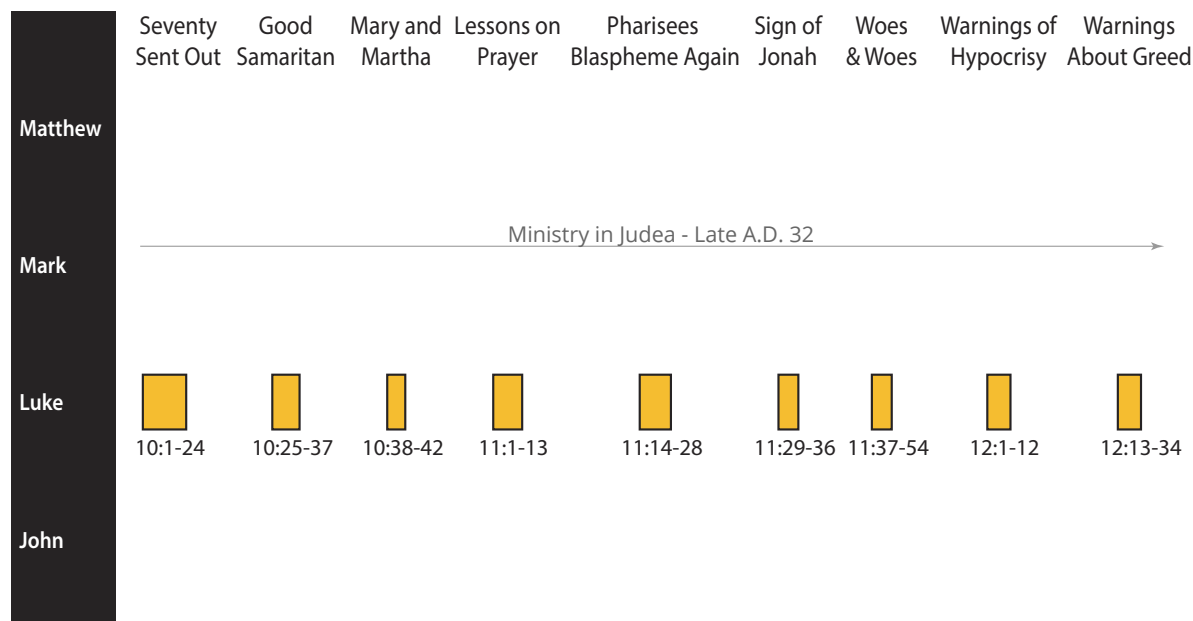
1. Origen. "Give Us Today Our Needful Bread" On Prayer. Chapter 27.

2. Ceslas Spicq. Theological Lexicon of the New Testament. Hendrickson Publishers. 1994. p. 55.

3. Ibid., p. 57.

# Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Judea - Late A.D. 32



wealthy or poor (1 Samuel 2:7). In Matthew 6:25-33 Jesus encourages us to not to worry but to trust God. He says do not be worried (v.25, 27, 28, 34) and do not worry (v. 31). Each time He reminds us that God cares for us. Why wouldn't He care for us since He cares for the birds and flowers - the little things in life. Jesus says, "Are you not worth much more than they? (Matthew 6:26)."

Oh, what a wonderful truth we miss. How often do we struggle in our prayers trying to convince God to give us something we think we need? Some Christians humble themselves in prayer. They cry out to God. Others try to convince God that they are worthy of blessing. The right response is to not worry but realize that whatever He gives us is for our best. We need to trust Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). He will meet our needs. Remember that the meaning of the word "daily" is "needful." He will meet your needs but not necessarily all of your wants. Yet, He will give us beyond our needs! He will richly bless us.

However, in Matthew 6:33 Jesus reminds us that there are two conditions to having our needs met.

**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33 (NASB)**

The first condition is that we must seek the Father's kingdom first. The Greek word that is translated as first is *protos*. The word means "first in a series." The Greek word is a cardinal number like 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Matthew 20:27 is a good example of this word. Jesus says in that verse that there are those who want to be first in importance. Therefore, this word implies that God is to be the first in importance in our lives. He is to be number one! Usually, a parent, a child, a spouse, some special person or even a career is more important than God. We ignore God, but we give a great amount of time to others and to things. Someone else or something else is number one!

Some Christians are great at making excuses. They claim that God is the priority of their lives. He is actually somewhere down the priority list after their sexual satisfaction, their television, money, sports, some individual or their important activities. How often have we heard people say that they are a Christian and then explain that they do not

go to church very often? They assure us that they pray and read their Bible every day! That is, they try to convince us that they are a Christian. But the truth is they either ignore or are not aware that their sin is violating Exodus 20:8-11 and Hebrews 10:24-25 every week. Some people say they do not go to church because they cannot stand those Christians, that pastor or that horrible music at the church. But both 1 John 3:10 and 4:20 indicate that such a person should ask themselves, "Am I a Christian?"

The message is that either God is first and we long to worship Him, or we do not. Aren't we supposed to go to church to worship God, to be challenged spiritually, and use our spiritual gifts in ministry to others? That is the simple truth. The sad part is that we sin when God is not first and that results in more sins. Then the second condition is not satisfied either - we are not righteous as He is righteous. Then those same individuals criticize God that He is not answering their prayers. Wow, what hypocrisy! Since when does God owe them anything, especially when they have put themselves first and are not living godly lives? They ignore God and then expect Him to meet their needs.

**OURSELVES - AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS.** Then Jesus tells us to conclude our prayers with confession of our sins.

And forgive us our sins,  
 For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
 And lead us not into temptation. Luke 11:4 (NASB)

The Greek word for forgive is *aphiemi*. It means "to send off, to hurl, to release or to let go." That is, when we confess our sins, they are removed from us. Spicq has discovered in the papyri that this verb, *aphesis*, was used in reference to draining water from a pool.

In the papyri, *aphesis* refers especially to the draining of water from pools (P.Oxy. 3167, 10; P.Petr. II, 13, 2: *aphesis tou hydatos*; P.Flor. 388, 44).<sup>4</sup>

That is, the literal sense of the word communicates a request

that our sins be drained from us. That is a great thought and truth. Imagine, it is as if all your sins are in a pool and then God drains the pool. Where did your sins go? Down the drain! God tells us in the Old Testament what happens to our sins when we confess them.

As far as the east is from the west,  
 So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12 (NASB)

Though your sins are as scarlet,  
 They will be as white as snow;  
 Though they are red like crimson,  
 They will be like wool. Isaiah 1:18 (NASB)

You have cast all my sins behind Your back. Isaiah 38:17 (NASB)

I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. Jeremiah 31:34 (NASB)

He will again have compassion on us;  
 He will tread our iniquities under foot.  
 Yes, You will cast all their sins  
 Into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19 (NASB)

The answer is that God has removed our sins, made them as white as snow, put them behind His back, remembers them no more, has stomped on them and thrown them into the deepest sea. They are gone. There is an old song called "Gone, Gone, Gone, Gone." It has these wonderful words,

Gone, gone, gone, gone  
 Yes my sins are gone,  
 Now my soul is free  
 And in my heart's a song;  
 Buried in the deepest sea  
 Yes, that's good enough for me—  
 I shall live eternally  
 Praise God!  
 My sins are G-O-N-E gone!

4. Spicq, C., & Ernest, J. D. Theological lexicon of the New Testament. Hendrickson Publishers. 1994. Vol. 1, p. 239.

## Lord's Prayer Compared Between Matthew and Luke

### Matthew 6:9-13

9 "Pray, then, in this way:  
 'Our Father who is in heaven,  
 Hallowed be Your name.  
 10 Your kingdom come.  
 Your will be done,  
 On earth as it is in heaven.  
 11 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 12 And forgive us our debts, as we  
 also have forgiven our debtors.  
 13 And do not lead us into tempta-  
 tion, but deliver us from evil.  
 [For Yours is the kingdom and the  
 power and the glory forever.  
 Amen.]"

### Luke 11:2-4

2 And He said to them, "When you  
 pray, say:  
 'Father, hallowed be Your name.  
 Your kingdom come.  
 3 Give us each day our daily bread.  
 4 And forgive us our sins,  
 For we ourselves also forgive  
 everyone who is indebted to us.  
 And lead us not into temptation."

Never to be remembered anymore,  
 Never to be remembered anymore,  
 For Jesus washed my burden of sinfulness  
 Into the Sea of Forgetfulness  
 Never to be remembered anymore  
 For they are gone, gone, gone, gone  
 Yes my sins are gone,  
 Now my soul is free  
 And in my heart's a song;  
 Buried in the deepest sea  
 Yes, that's good enough for me—  
 I shall live eternally  
 Praise God!  
 My sins are G-O-N-E gone! - Helen Griggs

The he song says it all. When we confess our sins, God forgives because Jesus Christ paid our penalty for our sins when He died on the cross. Now we will explore two important questions. First, how do Christians confess their sins, and second, why should Christians confess their sins?

*How Christians Confess Their Sins.* 1 John 1:9 tells us how to confess our sins.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NASB)

This verse has been memorized and quoted by many Christians. Yet, it is misunderstood by some. The key word in this verse is "confess." The Greek word *homologeō* that is translated as "confess" simply means "agree, say the same thing or to admit that an accusation is true." Therefore, in this verse it means to agree with God and publicly admit your bad behavior to Him. We are not told to beg and plead for forgiveness. King David is a wonderful, sincere example of confession. David says,

For I know my transgressions,  
 And my sin is ever before me.  
 Against You, You only, I have sinned  
 And done what is evil in Your sight,  
 So that You are justified when You speak  
 And blameless when You judge. Psalm 51:4-6 (NASB)

First, David admits that he sinned. He does not hide his sin.

He says that He sinned against God only, even though he committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged so that her husband would die in battle (2 Samuel 11-12). Then he declares that God is just and holy when he judges. That is, if and when God judges him and God did judge him, God is still holy and David deserved to be punished. David did not blame Bathsheba but admitted that he was guilty. Now, that is confession! Confession is openly admitting to God that you have sinned.

When we do that, 1 John 1:9 says that God will forgive our sins. He will forgive the ones we admit and the sins that we cannot remember. When was the last time that you confessed your sins? Did you name those sins one by one and admit that you did evil? Notice that David admitted he did evil. 1 John 1:9 tells us that God is faithful and righteous to forgive. The message is wonderful. We can trust Him to forgive us - He is faithful. Because He is righteous, He will forgive! If God did not forgive, then He would not be faithful and He would not be righteous. The last part of the verse six also terrific since it says that He will forgive all the sins you cannot remember. This is how we confess our sins. Notice that God does not ask to beg and plead. We are not told to seek a priest or a pastor and then publicly admit our sins to him.

*Why Christians Confess Their Sins.* Why do Christians confess their sins? Christians confess their sins for only one reason - they sinned against God. When we sin, our relationship with God is damaged. Christians do not stop being Christians and they do not have reservations in hell.

Christians are still Christians because Christ has promised that anyone who truly believes in Christ will escape eternal punishment and have eternal life (John 3:16). True faith in Christ includes repentance of sin and turning our life over to God. In John 6:37, 39, 40, 44, 47 and 54 Jesus promises that anyone who truly believes in Him will have eternal life and He will raise them on the last day. That is, they have eternal life now and in the future. Salvation is not a future event. It is a present reality.

Therefore, Christians do not confess daily their sins in order to have our present sins forgiven in order to go to heaven. Christians confess their sins because sin damages

their relationship with God. Ephesians 4:30 tells why the relationship is damaged. We have grieved the Holy Spirit.

**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 (NASB)**

This verse states that Christians can grieve the Holy Spirit but, yet, we are sealed for the day of redemption. That is, you are still going to heaven. We are “sealed.” The seal is a claim of ownership. God owns every Christian. Christians do not own themselves. How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? Simple. Just sin! Then confession restores the relationship and we avoid being disciplined by God (Hebrews 12:4-11).

*Our Position versus Our Practice.* What we have been discussing is our position in Christ versus our daily practice. This is an important concept. A clear understanding of this principle will be a great encouragement. Our position in Christ is best illustrated by someone playing in a baseball game. Let's say you are the pitcher on the mound. That is your position. You are the pitcher. But you might not be a very good pitcher during some games. If that happens, the coach will walk out to the mound and talk with you and tell you to get serious and strike out those other players. You had a position called pitcher, but you were not acting like it during that game.

God has a team too! Every Christian has a position in heaven already. Our position is in heaven. We are sitting in heaven (Romans 8:30; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20). God considers Christians godly individuals or *saints who are sitting in heaven, positionally*, but practically, some of us are not acting like it. That is the teaching of the New Testament (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1). Christians have been justified. That is, Christians have been judicially declared to be holy or righteous by God (Romans 5:2), even though we are not. We are legally or positionally holy, but practically we still sin.

So when we sin, our sin does not change our position. But we are not playing our position and the Coach is unhappy with us. Therefore, we must confess our sins and start playing our position of a godly man or woman who is going to heaven.



**OURSELVES - AS WE FORGIVE EVERYONE.** Next Jesus makes the point that our daily forgiveness assumes that we are forgiving others

And forgive us our sins,

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Luke 11:4a (NASB)

Jesus says that one of the characteristics of a Christian is that they always forgive others. What do they forgive? They forgive any debt that is owed them. The Greek word for debt is *opheilo* and it means “to owe.” The Greek word referred to anyone who had a legal debt, owed money, or had sinned against another. The word could be used to refer to the forgiveness of any debt. That is, Christians are not to take legal action against other Christians (1 Corinthians 6:5-7). We are to be humble, forgive them and be willing to be wronged. If someone owes you money, do not pay them back with evil. Instead be at peace with all men (Romans 12:17-18). If someone has done anything against you, let God punish them (Romans 12:19-20). That is the characteristic of a Christian. Christians are to forgive and be willing to be wronged. The same principle applies when someone sins against us. We are to forgive them just as we want God to forgive us. Jesus’ point is simple. We have been commanded to forgive others (Matthew 18:21-22; Ephesians 4:32). Therefore, if we are not willing to forgive the offense of another person, then we are sinning. We are self-centered, stubborn and unrepentant. If we are unrepentant, then God will not forgive us since we are not repentant of our sins. Psalm 66:18 says,

If I regard wickedness in my heart,

The Lord will not hear. Psalm 66:18 (NASB)

In Jesus’ earlier teaching about prayer (Matthew 6:14-15), He told the group of disciples that if they did not forgive others, then their sins would not be forgiven. That is, if they continued in sin (Psalm 66:18) by not forgiving others, then God would not hear their prayers and consequently their sins would not be forgiven.

**OURSELVES - LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.** Next

Jesus tells us to ask that God the Father not bring us into a situation where we are tempted by sin.

And lead us not into temptation. Luke 11:4b (NASB)

The Greek that is translated as “lead” is *eisphero*. It literally means “to bring, move or to carry into.” Flip Wilson once implied that he was not responsible for his sin when he said, “The Devil made me do it.” The truth is he sinned because he wanted to sin. The devil may have tempted him, but he agreed it was a good idea and sinned. That illustration helps us understand this verse. God may allow us or may intentionally set up a situation that is a test or trial, but God never tempts us and never motivates us to sin. If we sin, it was our idea.

For example, James 1:14 teaches us that God cannot be tempted and He does not tempt anyone.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. James 1:13-14 (NASB)

Here we discover that we cannot blame God in any way for our decision to sin. Our sin was our choice. We make ourselves do it. Yet, God does create situations for testing in order to grow our faith. That is the message just eleven verses earlier.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4 (NASB)

Trials are not temptations, they are simply difficult situations. If we have learned to trust God, then we will not sin by being fearful and becoming angry when we cannot control our situation (Habakkuk 3:16-19). If we have learned to walk in the Spirit, we will confess our sins, submit to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to help us not sin (Galatians 5:16-23). We will remember that in 1 Corinthians 10:13 God has

told us that He has provided a way to escape.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1  
Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

Being tested is like daily exercises. Daily physical exercise builds muscle and keeps us from getting flabby. Regular victory over sin makes us increasingly godly, spiritual men and women. When there are no temptations, there are no opportunities for spiritual victory and growth resulting in a spiritual young man and eventually a spiritual father (1 John 2:12-14).

Therefore, why did Jesus suggest that we ask not to be brought into temptation? One answer is that this may be what 1 Corinthians 10:13 is referring to. That is, asking God to rescue us from situations of temptation may be an ideal way to escape a temptation that you will struggle with and fail resisting. Vincent writes,

It is not a coward's prayer. No man is a coward for being afraid of his own heart. It marks the highest quality of courage to know what to be afraid of and to fear it. To pray that God will not bring us within the possibility of temptation, would be to ignore our manhood, or to pray to be taken out of the world. But we may pray, and will surely pray, the more keenly conscious we become of the weakness of our nature, that God will not suffer the trials of life to become temptations to evil.<sup>5</sup>

**CONCLUSION.** We praise Your holy name, God, our Father. We pray that Your will be done in our lives. We want You to have Your will done. We thank You for meeting our needs. Please convict us of our sins of not forgiving others so that we can be forgiven. Please keep us from situations in which we will fail our temptations. We thank you in Jesus' name.

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5. Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1887. vol. 1, p. 360.