

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ, when they make a great mistake or even a small one, they will go to their spiritual director and in some countries he will tell them to say so many paternosters and so many Ave Marias. Paternoster, of course, is Latin for Our Father and Ave Maria; you recognize, Hail Mary.

There is some wisdom in being told to think upon the contents of the Paternoster because it is the summary of the whole Bible and God, in his wisdom, has put in various places of Scripture, little summaries of the whole book! The beatitudes are a summary of the Sermon on the Mount and, indeed, of all Christ's ethical teachings, the decalogue is a summary of the laws of the Bible. I Corin. 13 is a summary of what the new commandment means to love one another. It spells it out. Why these summaries? Because we are so prone to forget. Unless God can give us something in a nutshell, we will never take hold of it.

At a recent service where I was speaking, I noticed two folks in a pew I had not seen before so I immediately said to a friend, "What are their names?" Before they had gotten to the door, I had forgotten one of the names. If you visit in our house you will often stumble over things at the front door. They are put there so I will stumble over them as I go out and then I remember something. This morning, working at my desk, I suddenly thought of something I had to look up so I threw something down where it should not be so I had to stumble over it as soon as I got up to remind me to look up the pronunciation of the name of a certain painter. Our memories are very fallible so God, in his mercy, gives us small

concentrated digests of truth so that we have no excuse and the Lord's prayer is one of those. If you doubt what I say, ask yourself how many sermons that you have heard could you reproduce to the extent of 5% or 10%. I have heard thousands of sermons and the fault is not in the preacher but in the listener. I can only remember about 3 or 4. When Roy asked me for a tape of the month for this month, he said, "What about this one you preached on three weeks ago, "Invitation to a Marriage." I said, "What was that about?" He said, "I don't know, I wasn't here." So I called Marion and said, "Marion, what was that sermon about?" Marion is no ordinary lady, she told me. Now I could reproduce the sermon today but I could not remember it when I was trying to search for it. So God is very merciful to us and because of this same problem, I am going to take 5 minutes to review what we said last week. I don't have to do that if anyone here can reproduce the sermon. The first thing we said was that Jesus took it for granted that believers will pray. He didn't say, if ye pray, he said, "When ye pray." A Prayerless person is a graceless person. If you do not know the experience of many, many times in a day offering short prayers because that what prayer is, not long sermons to heaven, short ejaculations of concentrated feeling and need, that's prayer, many times a day, if you don't know that experience you are yet very, very immature in Christ, if in Christ at all. "When ye pray," He takes it for granted that we will pray--say, "Our Father." The beginning, end and substance of the Christian life is a love relationship with God. The only reason we can say, "Thy will be done," is because we know Him as our great friend, our father, our provider. Only the penitent can pray the prayer because it says when we ask for forgiveness we say, "As we forgive those that trespass against us," so

here is someone who knows they need forgiveness and who has known the experience of forgiving others. There can be no pride and self complacency in someone who really prays because to pray is to shout, Lord, I'm very little and I need some one very big. So we've said a few things by way of review: remembering that many preachers have often given up preaching because they have learned the solemn truth that preaching is like a hose spraying water over a host of narrow necked bottles and only a few drops get in. And when preachers are in the congregation it is true of them too.

So, review, now extension: "It is written again," said Jesus. The Old Testament without the New is a heresy. Every sermon is a heresy because you can't say all the truth at once. Truth has many facets and we are so poor mentally and visually, we cannot see all the facets at once. So we take the same theme and we will try and extend it. The Pentatuch without the gospel is a heresy; Daniel without Revelation is a heresy; Leviticus without Hebrews is a heresy. It is written again....we need to see how God extends. That's why the story of the cross is told four times. You find in the Old Testament when anything is very important, the dream will often be doubled. God has such compassion on our weakness. He reminds us, he extends and he says it again. "Our Father," begins the prayer. The unbeliever says, "That's not realistic; this pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die by and by, that's not realistic!" It's the unbeliever that is not realistic because in materialism there is no hope and a life without hope is a dying life. Solzenitsken (?) said, "The terrible thing about secularism is it's utter pessimism." We talked before about how discouraging it is to get up in the

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morning and look in the mirror and say, "Hey, you meaningless clot of coincidental molecules." Secularism is very pessimistic. Literature is full of reminders of this. Even the youth learn it very early. At a primary school the children were asked to write an essay on life as briefly as they could. The boy who won did it in three words: hatched, matched, dispatched. A more sophisticated version was given by an Irish poet. He said, "Birth, copulation and death, they're all the facts when it comes to brass tacks." Another poet, Yates, said, "Things fall apart, the center cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. The best lack all conviction but the worst are filled with passionate intensity." That is a beautiful description of a materialistic secularistic age...things falling apart, the center cannot hold, anarchy, the best lack all conviction..." A lot of wimps, "and the worst are filled with passionate intensity." The one I like best is by Conrad ^{Aiken} ~~John~~ (?). He wrote something like this, "We need a theme, then let that be our theme, that we poor grovelers between faith and doubt, the heart's weak engine almost stopped; time, timeless in this chaos of our wills, that we ask a theme, something to think, something to say between dawn and dark, something to hold to, something to love." No wonder Nietzsche said, "Has it not grown colder? Are we wandering infinitely through endless space? Is there still and up and a down?" You see, without God to talk to we don't know who we are. I occasionally tell Gil some joke that struck my fancy and the latest one was today about a monkey in the zoo; have you ever wondered why they look so quizzical? The reason is that they have not made up their mind whether they are their brother's keeper or their keeper's brother. Unless God is our Father, who are we? Nature has made a monkey out of us. But prayer tells us who we are. We are the children of a loving

heavenly Father and prayer is the most realistic thing in the world because it sees life as it really is, a very dangerous situation. None of us get out of it alive and we need God. Faith is the most realistic of all things. It opens one's eyes to the greatest fact of the universe, the availability of God. The person who does not pray is over impressed with the things that are visible and noisy. You think of the clatter and static of noise with our radios, our TVs, the noise of advertising that jumps out at us from billboards and newspapers. It is a world of clatter and clutter. But you know, the strongest things in the universe are invisible and silent. A million bolts of electricity can course down a copper band with less noise than a robin makes trampling on the grass. Gravity holds the universe together. You ever heard gravity? You get an x-ray taken...you don't know when it has begun, finished or in the middle. All you know you are one step closer to cancer or healing. Mighty tides are silent as they come in but they can hold up the great ships of the ocean. Magnetism, a host of things that are the most powerful in our universe make no noise whatever. Sunrise is not very noisy otherwise people would despair. Most people like to sleep in beyond sunrise. Just imagine if the sun's rising was a noisy affair. It would upset all our world! And so, the unbeliever is really quite foolish when he is too influenced by the tangible, visible and the noisy.

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This prayer, the Patenoster, gives us a perspective on life. I mentioned to you last week that one morning I thought I will try out an experiment that I had long thought about. I got some of Confucius that had been written about 500 years after he lived, read it, got some of Socrates who never wrote a line. Plato wrote

for him about the 4th century B.C. Then I read Virgil who was 50 years before Christ and then I read Plutarch who was a contemporary of Paul and then some of the ^{BHAGAVAD-GITA} ~~Vagavegeta~~ (?), the Hindu scriptures which are very, very ancient and then some of Arabian ~~Knights~~ which belong to about the 8th and 10th centuries. The thing that characterized them all is they were all stamped with time and place. The Lord's prayer is not. The Lord's prayer can be said anywhere, everywhere by anyone in any situation. There's nothing that says it is just for the blacks; nothing that says it is just for the whites, not just for the Australians, the New Zealanders or the Americans; nothing that says for over-50s, the senior citizen. None of that is stamped in the Lord's prayer. It's for everybody and not one syllable is localized. It takes inspiration to do that. All we need is in it. I'm glad it does not miss out on the material things..."Give us this day our daily bread." Bread stands for all the needs of our physical existence...not cake, bread. I am glad it is there. I am very interested in physical existence. I love the text that says God is able to give us all things necessary for life AND godliness. I'm not spiritual enough to want it to read, he only gives us the things necessary for godliness. He gives us all things necessary for life and godliness. I'm glad the New Testament talks about Paul in his prison sending a message, "Bring my coat." Even better, I like ^{what} he said to bring the manuscripts.

The prayer has all our needs and the heart of it is our spiritual need. It is only the person who has known forgiveness that can live right. It is only the person whose heart has been broken by the mercy of God who knows how to live. You know the golden key to anybody's heart is to love them; we know that. That's how most

got married. Let any person tell another person, "I love you" and all the barriers are dissolved. So in the heart of the prayer is the experience of the heart being broken by the love of God and such a heart does not find it difficult then to do the will of God. They have found love.

I want to concentrate with you today on a negative section of the prayer... apparently negative. Please look at me at Matthew 6 and notice from 12 on, "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver from evil." Sounds very negative--talking about my failures, talking about trial, trouble and temptation, talking about evil? Lord, why are you so negative? Shouldn't we just talk sunny things? Should we not just sing? Why not only praise? Why not skip onto, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." That's uplifting, Lord! That is some of the manuscripts but not in most of them. It comes from the Old Testament. It does come from Jesus. Never have your doubts about, "Thine is the kingdom, the power...." It does come from Jesus. You will find it in I Chronicles, chapter 29 (I think it is verse 11) where Jesus inspired Solomon to pray it. Let's look at that text. Why does the Lord give these negative thoughts about trouble, trial and temptation, sin, evil and the evil one. Why not just finish it with what we find here in I Chron. 29? Many Christians have been troubled because most modern Bibles leave out the doxology, "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." But it is from Jesus but it's found in the Old Testament and the early Christians incorporated it and added it to the Lord's Prayer. Verse 11, I Chron. 29: "Thine, oh Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that's in the heavens and in the earth is

thine; thine is the kingdom, oh Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." Ever read that verse? Isn't it a great verse? "Thine is the greatness, thine is the power, thine is the glory." We like to take glory to ourselves; we are prone to do that all the time... preachers and people preached at. We're all prone to do it but thine is the glory. None of it belongs to us. "Thine is the glory; thine is the victory," this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, but faith is the gift of God as you hear the gospel. "Thine is the victory and the majesty, all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom and thou art exalted as head above all." Why not skip from give us our daily bread to that? That would have been a wonderful way? Why drag in the story of my mistakes, my failures, my selfishness, my sin? Why remind me that life is full of temptation trial and difficulty? Why remind me of the evil one from whom I need deliverance and purveyors of evil? Why that? Can't you do something about that, Lord? I'll tell you why, the Bible is a book of truth. You can't tell the truth about a 24 hour day without alluding to the night. You can't tell the truth about a rainbow unless you discuss all the colors and they are not all bright. The fact is that the world we live in is a miry place because of sin. It is the place of pitch because of sin. There is, so to speak, a robber on every street corner who would take our jewels if he could and we are all carrying around gun powder and we need to watch out for candles. The Bible is trying to be very realistic, indeed, because the essence of Christian experience is the awareness of need...no need? No blessing. No need? No spiritual life. No acknowledgement of need? No growth. You see, the Bible is far more concerned with character than comfort. It is

far more concerned with growth than pleasure. My carnal nature isn't. I would rather have comfort than character and I would rather have pleasure than growth. That's my carnal nature. God is much wiser. When we say he is more concerned with character than comfort what we are really saying is he wants your eternal comfort, not just something temporary. When we say he is more concerned with growth than pleasure we are saying he wants your eternal pleasure but it all grows out of an awareness of need.

Most people do not see the world aright. We have often talked about how you can put a silver dollar to your eye and it blots out the sun. People do it all day long--not literally, but people do it all day long. We have short aims, short objectives, usually selfish, and they blot out the sun. See, the Lord's Prayer is meant to teach us a sense of proportion. It tells us the real essence of life. It challenges me as to my ordering of existence. It asks me do I make first what God makes first and last what he makes last and least what he makes least. A sense of proportion is a rare thing. By nature we make a world of an atom and an atom of a world. The 80-20 principle is an unknown principle to most people. Twenty per cent of what we do has eighty per cent importance and eighty per cent of what we do has only twenty per cent of importance. The important thing is to know which is the twenty. What should I dwell on and what things should I skip over. It's a great freedom to learn there are 10,000 things that invite time and attention from which you must turn away. Think of the junk mail we all get. Life is full of that, full of junk. We choose it, we pursue it, we seek it! We don't realize it is junk because something like a silver dollar blots out the sun. The Lord's Prayer says, hey, seek ye first the kingdom of God--there's first,

important word in the mouth of Jesus. He often used it. First, be reconciled to your neighbor, then come and offer your gift. Here's the first and great commandment. We need to be sure what is first and what's last. Spiritual things are first; the invisible things are first; the silent things are first. If we are the creatures of our time, if we are the children of our generation, if we are average people, we are in bad shape. A true Christian stands out like a bandaged sore thumb. You can't be a Christian without being different. You are going to live by the invisible. You are going to live by the silent. You are going to live by the spiritual. And so, God is not really being negative when he says these things. He is trying to create in us an awareness of need for without the awareness of need, we won't seek God.

Some psychologists tell us that all choices are made on the wish to avoid pain. There's a lot of truth in that. God says, listen, I'll tell you how to avoid pain, put first first, give the things of Heaven their place, be content to live a temperate style, keep life to its essentials and its simplicities. You know it was Thoreau who lived in the woods and said, "You should try keep your accounts on your thumbnail." We can't do that in the 20th century but the principle was pretty good, wasn't it? We have too much happening. As I view the world of scholarship, most men who write books today are very superficial. In the days of Matthew Henry, who died at 52, men studied, really studied, on an average of about 6 hours a day or more. Today most men in the academic field, in a superficial world, even in academia, are not the researchers, not the scholars that are deep. Depth is a lost art for our generation. We like the short stories and

quick ad, something that happens and is over. They now have churches where the sermon runs 10 minutes. If you are 5 minutes late⁴ you will miss half the sermon, see? God is trying to tell us to keep life to its simplicities, see the things that stand out, right relationship to God, right relationship to our fellows, acknowledge our need, avoid sin by embracing him who is righteousness.

The truths of the Lord's Prayer are found through the whole Bible. This is only a summary of them. They are not always found in the same words but they are there and we could take many, many examples. Let me just give you one or two. Turn to John 17, here's the real Lord's prayer. The one we call the Lord's Prayer, he never prayed. He said, "When you pray," because he did not have to ask for forgiveness so he never ever prayed what we call the Lord's Prayer. Here's the real Lord's prayer in John 17. I want you to notice how it illustrates that the things in what we call the Lord's Prayer are echoed again and again throughout all Scripture though the same words may not be used but the same essence is there. The first word (John 17) of Jesus is what? "Father," and it does not say our Father in this prayer because he is distinct, though not separate from us; he is not a sinner. "Father, the hour has come," and what hour is that? Come back to chapter 12 for a moment and notice verse 31, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out." That's a comment on verse 27..."Father, shall I say save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour." The hour that Christ refers to is the judgment of the world when evil is overcome. In other words, the kingdom of God is being ushered in by the cross. That's what he means by "the hour has come...thy kingdom come," the same as

in the Lord's Prayer. You notice that he says in verse 4, "I have glorified thee on the earth." Verse 6, "I have manifested thy name to the men." What does that make you think of in the Lord's prayer? "Hallowed be thy name," I've manifested it, I've hallowed it. "Thine they were and thou gave them to me and they have kept thy word." That, my friends, Christ kindly paraphrases, "forgive us our trespasses." I almost laugh aloud when I read that text--they hadn't. He could only say that through grace. He could only say that because of the coming cross. He could only say that because he did not see them as they were in themselves, he only saw them in himself--perfect. "They have kept thy word." That's how we are all counted if we are believers in Christ..."Forgive us our trespasses...I have given them the word which thou gavest me." He has given them their spiritual bread day by day and then he says further on (verse 9), "I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me for they are thine, all mine are thine," and he prays (verse 12) about having guarded them, he's kept them, he has led them not into temptation; he has delivered them from evil. So things in the Lord's prayer are found in the true Lord's prayer.

I want to take two other examples. Psalm 23 Fern Mc_____ this week kindly lent me a beautiful batch of booklets on the 23rd Psalm and I have spent hours reading them. Come with me to Psalm 23 because as I studied these booklets I was reminded afresh how in every part of the Bible the great themes of the Lord's prayer are set out. You know, the whole Bible, like the Lord's prayer begins with God; the decalogue begins with God; the Shepherd's psalm begins with God... "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," and if you wanted to sum

up the message of the Lord's prayer, it can be done in three words: God is sufficient. And if you look at the 23rd Psalm it is saying the same thing...God is sufficient. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," I shall not want rest, why? "Because he maketh me to lie down in green pastures." I shall not want drink because, "He leadeth me besides still waters." I shall not want forgiveness, meaning lack it because, "He restores my soul." I shall not lack guidance because, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness." I shall not lack companionship because he tells me in the last half of verse 4, "Thou art with me." I shall not lack comfort, "For thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me." I will not lack food (verse 5), "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." I will not lack joy because, "My cup overflows," as a matter of fact, I will not lack anything I really need. I may lack a lot of things I think I want but I'll not lack anything I really need in this life because verse 6 says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And I will not lack anything in eternity because, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The message of the Lord's pray, God is enough is spelled out in every section of Scripture. There is a wonderful unity in Scripture.

Now let us apply/^{it}to the whole New Testament. Christ says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. The sheep hear my voice." I shall not lack rest because the good shepherd says, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. I shall not lack drink for he says if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. I shall not lack guidance for he says, I am the way, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness. I shall not lack comfort or companionship...he says he will be with

you always and I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter. I shall not lack food for he says he is the bread of life. I will not lack joy because he says, these things I have spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you. I will not lack anything in this life that I REALLY need for he has told me seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you...in God's time...in God's way, not my carnal untutored, impatient selfish time. That would develop nothing in me but more selfishness ...but in God's good time and in God's good way all these things shall be added unto you and I shall lack nothing in eternity for I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again and receive you unto myself for in my Father's house are many mansions, many resting places. And so, I refer you to paternoster, God's remedy against our failing memories, giving us in a nutshell the main things we need to remember about life, the importance of the spiritual, the invisible, the unseen, the God whom we cannot see. You know, the sun tries to teach us a lesson every day. We believe in the sun not because we look at it but because by it we look at everything else. Ever thought about that? You don't believe in the sun because you spend minutes gazing at it; we believe in the sun not because we see it but because by it we see everything else. Without God life is a shambles. The materialist who says the Christian is not a realist is himself not a realist for there is no hope in materialism; there is only pessimism in secularism. We don't know who we are. We are like that quizzical monkey in the zoo unless we can say, "Our Father."