Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Provision of Prayer, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 6:11
Code: 2240

It's a great joy this morning to come back to Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 to 13. I'd like us to have a word of prayer as we begin. Father, we commit the next moments to You, and ask that You would be our teacher. We desire to be nothing more than a clear channel through which You speak. May Your truth be uncluttered with human error or embellishment. And may we hear You speak to us, and may we be filled with wonder at Your power and Your grace to us. May we know better how to pray because we've shared this time. In Christ's name, Amen.

Learning how to pray is very important. Learning how to pray is learning how to commune with God, and I can't think of anything more important than that. In fact it's so important that the Scripture says we're to pray without ceasing. We're to pray always. And if we are to pray always and pray without ceasing, and if prayer is communion with God, and if "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," then effective prayer is very, very important. How fitting it is that we really know how to pray then.

How tragic it would be to spend a lifetime missing the right way to commune with God, and there is that possibility, you know? For according to the apostle Paul in Romans 8, "The Spirit has to make intercession for us often, because of our infirmity of the flesh," which means that we don't know how to pray as we ought. So here we are with this incredible resource of prayer to commune with God and to tap the divine resource. And we are to be engaged in that at all times, and yet how often the flesh inhibits the legitimacy and the rightness of those prayers. And I dare say that if we could be taught to pray by anyone, the one that we would choose would be our Lord who knew best how to commune with the Father. And that is precisely what we have in Matthew 6:9 to 13.

We have Jesus instructing us to pray, and giving us the elements and the ingredients in a proper prayer perspective. I don't know how you have responded to this series as we've been involved in it, but my own heart has given great attention to it in my study because I sense here, as you do in the gospel record as you study the words of Christ particularly, that you are being taught literally by Christ Himself. If we had announced that Jesus was to be our teacher this morning, and He were to stand in this place, I dare say we would listen and we would hear with attentive ears that injunction that faces us in verse 11 for this day. "Give us this day our daily bread." And we would want to know all that there was to know about the meaning of that great wonderful statement. Well, He's not here in one sense but in another He is. He's not here in terms of the limits of my flesh, but He is here in terms of the unlimited truth of His Word, and so we will be attentive to what His Word has to say for us and to

us.

Let's read again verses 9 to 13 so we have the setting. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Now remember, will you, as we approach again this passage that Jesus is contrasting His standard of prayer with that of the scribes and the Pharisees. And basically just to sum it up in a simple statement, Jesus' standard of prayer focuses on God while their standard of prayer focused on themselves. In verse 5, Jesus said, "You love to pray standing in the corners, and at the wide parts of the street, in order to be seen of men." In verse 7, He says in effect, you use vain repetition like the pagans do, as if you could cajole God or badger God into giving you what you want. Verse 8, you assume that you have some information to give God that is not at His disposal, were it not for your particular involvement. So that your attitude and your action and the very form of your prayer is all focused on you.

And in contrast to that Jesus says, when you pray everything is to be focused on Him. "Our Father," is God's paternity. "Hallowed be Thy name," is God's priority. "Thy kingdom come," is God's program. "Thy will be done," is God's purpose. "Give us this day our daily bread," is God's provision. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is God's pardon and so forth. Everything focuses on God. That's the way prayer ought to be. Prayer is not for me; it's for Him. It's not for my getting; it's for His glory. And we've been learning that as we've been moving through this tremendous prayer. In fact the first three petitions, "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Put the whole prayer in perspective that nothing of petition regarding ourselves is even introduced until God is in the prior place. I ask nothing that does not hallow His name. I ask nothing that does not bring in His kingdom in some element. I ask nothing that is not the expression of His will.

Now, having established that we move then from those elements related specifically and directly to God to those which relate to human need, and we come to verse 11. "Give us this day our daily bread." Now we're going to look at five features, and we've already seen the first two, and just to remind you of them, five features of this simple petition. First of all the substance that is requested. What is it? It's bread. "Give us this day our daily bread." And you'll remember that we suggested to you that the concept of bread here is really a symbol for all of our physical needs, probably encompassing the three basic needs food, clothing, and shelter. Bread then sums up the physical need, the temporal need, the basic necessities of life. We are of little use to God in accomplishing His ends and His goals in this life if He does not meet our basic physical needs to keep us alive. And so commensurate with His usefulness of us in this, His kingdom, as He brings it into the earth is the

necessity to supply our physical need.

Now, the second thing we talked about, not only the substance but the source. The assumption of the petition is that the source is God. He's implied behind the verb, "Give us." We look to God as the source of everything. We went into this in great detail three weeks ago in our last study. In one sense I regret that we've had this interval and in another sense I don't because I've been able to really clear my thinking on this particular verse in the meantime. And so I think maybe there's more to be said now of meaningful truth than would have been two weeks ago. But God is the source of everything. You don't possess anything that He didn't provide. He is the Creator and the Sustainer and the Preserver of the entire universe. Everything that we have is from His hand, everything. And so the source is God and the substance is bread.

The first petition then that rises from the heart of a child of God to the Father is that petition surrounding physical need. There's nothing wrong with seeking God's face in regard to that, as long as the motive is that through it His name be hallowed and through it His kingdom come and through it His will be done. He is the one who desires to meet our physical need. And of course we know from James 1:17, "That every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We know from 1 Timothy chapter 4, "That all things are to be received with thanksgiving, for the Word of God and our prayer of thanks sanctifies them."

God has given us everything good to enjoy. We said then last time that the idea of the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is not simply the prayer of a beggar, though it could be a prayer of one who has nothing for the very next meal. But it is also the acknowledgment of all of us that it is God who is the source of every physical provision. For some people it might be, "Lord, I don't have something to eat for my next meal. I ask You to give me my daily bread that You may be glorified in the provision." For us it may be, "Lord, You have supplied so much, and I thank You and I acknowledge You as the source, and I ask You to continue to provide with such graciousness, that Your name may glorified." So whether you do not have and you ask to receive or whether you have and you ask to continue to receive, the petition is the same. It recognizes God as the source.

Now what is the supplication? It's the verb, give. "Give us this day our daily bread." This is the heart of the petition, and this is kind of what we want to major on this morning. Now, what right do we have to ask God for this? Do I have some reason or rhyme to say to God, "Give me my daily bread, Father"? Is there a basis on which that petition is valid? Well the only basis would be that God had promised to do that, right? That God had promised to meet my physical needs. And if He's made that promise, then I have a right to ask Him to fulfill it. And that is precisely the promise that He has given us.

Turn with me to Psalm 37, and I want to set in your mind a basic consideration that we're going to talk about, that I hope will be helpful to you in understanding how God desires to meet your physical needs. Now, I don't believe that God is bound, mark this, to meet the physical needs of everybody. I believe there are some conditions. There are some conditions, and we'll see this repeatedly as we move through this morning. But I don't believe that God is bound to meet everybody's physical needs. Let's look at Psalm 37 beginning at verse 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good." Now, that simple statement is profound folks, because it encompasses the significance of salvation. Salvation is believing God, resulting in good works, right? "Faith without works is dead." So simply saying, "Trust in the Lord, and do good," is just like summing up soteriology, summing up the doctrine of salvation, believing, and the result of that true faith is good works.

Now then, if you are one who believes and that believing is manifest faith, then you have the promise that "You will dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be – " what? " - fed." Isn't that great? Now that's pretty practical. I think that some of us feel that most of the promises of the Bible have to do with spiritual truth, and that is true, but never to the exclusion of the physical. We would be little spiritual good to the Lord here in the world if He didn't meet our physical need. And, by the way, if you need a New Testament comparison go to 2 Corinthians chapter 9. Don't turn to it now, but just write it down, 2 Corinthians chapter 9. It talks about how we are to give, "Not grudgingly, or of necessity; but because the Lord loves a cheerful giver. We are to sow not sparingly, but bountifully. And God is able to minister bread for your food, and to make your fruits of righteousness abound."

In other words, when you give to God and invest in God's kingdom, God will not only provide spiritual fruit, but He will provide, says 2 Corinthians 9, bread for your food. The physical provision of God is a biblical promise. Now further on in verse 4 it says, "Delight in the Lord." Then it says, "Commit your way unto the Lord." Then in verse 7 it says, "Rest in the Lord." And then in verse 8 it says, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath." And it goes through this, and it makes a comparison between the righteous person who does this and the unrighteous. "The unrighteous man shall be cut off," verse 9. Shall be cut off. The wicked, verse 12, is mentioned, and then in verse 13, "The Lord will laugh at him; for he sees that his day is coming."

In other words, for the righteous there is promise, for the unrighteous there is judgment. Now, go down for a moment to verse 18, "The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. And they shall not be ashamed in the evil time - " now watch " - and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Isn't that great? The promise of the provision of God for His own people in a time of famine. Though the unrighteous may perish, the righteous will have provision. Verse 20, "The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord be like the fat of lambs. They shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." That kind of fat really burns, and that's the way it is with the wicked. God has no obligation to provide for them, but for us He does.

Now I don't think it's necessarily always going to be a feast, but then after all Proverbs 15:17 says, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred." When the relationships are right it doesn't have to be fancy. Let me give you an illustration of this if I can. I hadn't really intended to use this but I want to take the time to do it here. First Kings chapter 16. I think this is a graphic illustration of the principle that God provides for His own in the midst of a famine.

The history of Israel in the divided kingdom was a tragic history. They had all bad kings, and it seemed as though they went from bad to worse until finally they culminated in the most wretched of all of them by the name of Ahab, who was the son of Omri. And in 1 Kings 16 verse 25, we find that Ahab takes over for his father Omri when Omri dies. And Ahab takes the throne and reigns in Israel 22 years. And Ahab brought 22 years of problems, frankly, to that land of Israel. He married that wretched woman, Jezebel, who worshiped Baal and brought in all the Baal worship and reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal. Verse 32, "And Ahab made an idol; and he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." And the nation sunk into the pits of unrighteousness. As, a result of it verse 1 of 17, "And Elijah, the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.'"

In other words God says that's it for the provision for Israel. No rain, no crops, no crops no food, no food, famine. But in the midst of it, verse 2, "And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, 'Get thee from here, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook, Cherith, which is before the Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.'"

Isn't that unbelievable? Commanded who to feed him? The ravens. God organized the ravens to bring food to His prophet. Why? Because the wicked may perish, but in a famine the righteous will be preserved for God makes promises of physical provision for His own. "And the ravens – " verse 6 " - brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook." Well, the brook eventually dried up, and the prophet needed something to eat. And so the Lord said to him, "'Go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there; and I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee.' And he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, the widow was gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.'"

Now, that's coming on pretty strong to the little widow who's picking up the sticks, as if she was supposed to know who this was. But apparently the Lord had kind of prepared her heart as verse 9 indicates, "And as she was going to fetch the water, he called to her and said, 'By the way, bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'" Now hat introduced a severe problem. She said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, I'm gathering two sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.'" That's it.

We have enough left to make one little cake. My son and I are going to split it and then die of starvation.

“And Elijah said into her, ‘Fear not; go and do as thou hast said. But make me of it a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and then afterwards make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, ‘The barrel of meal shall not be used up, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain on the earth.’ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she and he and her house, did eat for many days. And the barrel of meal as not used up, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Elijah.”

Isn’t that tremendous? That barrel just stayed full all the time, and that cruse of oil just stayed full all the time. And they just kept eating and God miraculously fed that widow and her son and that prophet in the midst of the famine. Why? Because God was bound by His promise to His people that one who trusts in the Lord and does good will be fed. And I really believe that sometimes we forget that God is concerned for the physical provision, and that we can claim that promise at His good and gracious hand.

Go down in Psalm 37 again if you left there. I want to kind of climax this wonderful truth. Verse 22 says, “For such as are blessed by Him shall inherit the earth; and they who are cursed by Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way. And though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand.” The whole idea here is a righteous man is cared for by the Lord. And then the climax of it is so wonderful in verse 25. And David says this, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed – ” doing what? “ - begging bread.” David says, I’ve been around a long time, and I have never seen the righteous forsaken and his seed begging bread. Why? Verse 26, “Because God is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.”

Verse 27, that’s good reason to “Depart from evil, and do good.” The promise of God for physical supply. God feeds His own, beloved. I’ve even read in the Bible about God sheltering His own if He has to grow His own private gourd over his head, just to keep the sun off him. And the Lord said in Luke 18:28 to 30 that, “None of you has left father, and mother, and houses, and brother to follow Me.” But that I’ll give all of that stuff to you, “Manifold times in this life and in the life to come.” I believe God has provided houses and lands and fathers and mothers and homes for His own in this life as well as the life to come.

Now, this is a tremendous thing, beloved, to know that God is a God who has promised to give us physical supply. Imagine if you were outside the knowledge of God, and you had no such claim on God. Imagine, for example Irasema De Silva, who lives in a favela in Brazil, favela’s that I myself have seen which are indescribable paper, cardboard slums built on the sides of the hills of Rio in Sao Paulo. “Sometimes I think,” she said, “if I die I won’t have to see my children suffering like they are.

Sometimes I think of killing myself because I see them crying hungry, and there I am without a cent to buy them bread."

Stan Mooneyham of World Vision tells the heart rending story of a visit to the house of Sebastian and Maria Nociamento, another poor favela family in Brazil. He describes the house as one room lean-to with a thatched roof and sand floor, one stool, a charcoal hibachi and four cots which were potato sacks filled with straw. He says, "My emotions could scarcely take in what I saw and heard, the three-year-old twins lying naked and unmoving on a small cot were in the last act of their personal drama. Mercifully, the curtain was com-ing down on their brief appearance. Malnutrition was the villain. The father is without work, and both he and Maria are anguished over their existence, but too proud to beg. He tries to shine shoes and Maria can't talk about their existence. She tries, but words just will not come. Her mother's love is deep and tender and the daily deteriora-tion of her children is more than she can bear."

And God is not bound to those who do not trust Him and do good. Oh God may, in His gracious and sovereign choice, feed the unrighteous on occasion, but He's not bound to that. And someday all of those who are wicked will go hungry. Luke 6:25 says, "Woe to you that are full now! For you shall hunger." God is bound only to the physical provision of those who are His own children.

In India, men forsake their wives and their children just to find food. Families commit suicide together. Mothers throw their babies into the swirling waters of the Ganges and watch them die, as an act of sacrifice to their gods because they're going to die of malnutrition anyway. And if they die of malnutrition there's no religious virtue bound up in that, and so they'd rather drown them so at least the gods can be appeased. As long as they're going to die, they might as well gain some religious end. But you know something? With all of the problems and the struggles and the famines of our world, the issues, beloved, are not really the fact that the earth can't provide food. That isn't the case at all.

Indira Gandhi herself says, there is enough resource in India to feed that nation entirely, and then export two thirds of all that it produces. Some of us think that the world can't produce food for mankind. That isn't true. Do you know something? I was reading this week that the more people we have in the world, the more productivity we have because man is a productive being. I was reading also this week that you could put the entire population of the world in the state of Montana. That leaves a lot of space left. Fifteen percent of the harvestable land on the globe is being used for that and only half of that every year. Our problem is not a lack of resources. Our problem is not too many people. There are less people per square mile in New York today than there were 50 years ago. The resources are there, but what cuts people off from those resources is a spiritual issue, and I'll get into that in a moment; because if they were brought into the knowledge of God, I believe God has made a world that could provide for them.

In Psalm 33 backing up from 37, verse 18 says, “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, upon those who hope in His mercy to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.” N ow it’s amazing to me that God would literally, as a general rule sort out His own people in the midst of a famine and preserve them. Now He may not do it with ravens or like Jesus, feeding Him with angels, or He may not shelter them with a gourd that grows up over their head. Usually He feeds His own people with other of His own people, doesn’t He? But God takes care of His own in the midst of a famine. Chapter 34, verse 10, Psalms, verse 9 says, “Oh, fear the Lord, ye His saints; for there is no lack to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” They’re not going to go hungry. What a wonderful exciting promise from God.

In Proverbs chapter 3 verse 5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” And what is the result of it? Verse 8, “It’ll be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones. Honor the Lord with your substance, and your first fruits of all your increase; and your barns will be filled with plenty, and your presses will burst out with new wine.” God makes physical provision for our needs in His gracious care as a loving Father for His children.

Proverbs 10:3, “The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish, but He casts away the substance of the wicked.” God then, I think, makes it abundantly clear in the Scripture that He is committed to the care of His people. You say, “Well John you’re talking about Old Testament principles.” No, I’m not. Look at Matthew 7:7, and we’ll get over into the New Testament for a moment. Matthew 7, then I want to illustrate it to you, and what does it say? “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” and we usually equate that with spiritual things. In fact that verse is used often of someone coming to Christ and asking for salvation. Then it says in verse 8, “For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” But just exactly what Christ is referring to is indicated in verse 9 “What man is there of you whom, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? And if then, you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?” And what is the illustration of the good things? It’s bread and meat.

God is concerned with giving the very basics of life to His people, just as a father would be to his own. And that follows right on the heel of chapter 6 verse 25 and following. And what a marvelous text that is, which says you don’t need to be worrying about what you eat or what you drink or what you wear, God takes care of that. You just seek first the kingdom and everything else will find its rightful place.

Now listen, there have been times when feeding and shelter and clothing has been a supernatural act of God, but usually God meets the needs of His people through His other people. So that where you

have a Christian community you have that interchange. And also through the fact that a child of God has such a high view of the value of man, that he seeks not only to meet his own needs but the needs of others. In James 2:16, for example, it says, if somebody comes in and they're naked and destitute, and you pat them on the back and say, "Brother, I hope the Lord meets your needs," it's questionable whether you're really regenerated. And in 1 John 3 it says, that if a brother comes a long, and he has a great need and you, "Close up the bowels of your compassion toward him, how dwelleth the love of God in you?"

In other words it is almost the innate response of one who knows God that he supplies the needs of others. Further, that he will be engaged in work that will supply his own needs, and we'll see more about that in a minute. Now, let me spread this out and give you some illustrations of this. God has given us a literal global illustration of this truth; that where in the world you have Christian heritage and Christian roots, you have a high view of human life. And where you have that high view of human life, you have a great supply for those people. In the parts of the world where there are no Christian roots, you have a low view of human life, and there you have great famine and poverishment.

For example, nations that have been under the influence of the gospel, nations that have known Christian teaching have a high respect for the value of man as created in God's image and the object of divine redemption. And they are not as prone to suffer the hunger and the deprivation as are non-Christian nations. Now, there may be isolated illustrations where these things are not always the case but in general, far and away, this is clearly the truth. Take, for example, America. America is a nation founded upon Christian principles, and Christianity gave to this country a high view of human life so that we were committed from the Bill of Rights right on out to meeting the needs of people. And here we are today in 1980, we're still concerned with the minimum wage law. We're concerned with equality for everybody, equal education, equal pay for equal work, and on and on and on. We've very deeply concerned that everybody have medical care, that everybody be on a welfare system who doesn't work so that their needs are met. Where did we get that? Our humanism never gave it to us. Our humanism would obliterate the part of the population that's unneeded. The abortionists, they would just wipe out human beings. The people who advocate euthanasia, and the people who want to just shelve the others that are a detriment to our society and control birth and say who gets born to whom. So those people aren't the ones who gave us a high view of man. America, in the midst of its atheism and its humanism and its immorality and its departure from Christian truth, still can't shake the residual impact of a high view of man that came from the Word of God even though they'd never acknowledge that's where they get it. And even the ungodly in our nation, like those in 1 Corinthians 7 are sanctified by the believers and receive the benefit.

Take on the other hand India, because India is probably the most influential nation in the world because India is the place where Hinduism is born. And Hinduism basically spawned all of the network of religions that engulf the entire Orient, the entire East. And the whole network of religious heritage, the entire legacy of Hinduism in the Orient is deprivation because the view of man is so low.

They do not believe that man is created in God's image, that that is anything significant at all. In the first place, they believe their gods are sinful. The natural resources of India can meet the needs of India. There's no limit on their resources, but it is their religion that as trapped them. Let me show you why.

Six out of ten people in Calcutta live on the street. Six out of ten, without food, without shelter, without clothes. And in India there are 660 million people. 15 million die every year; 27 million are born. They just keep getting more and more people and that means more and more people living on the streets. Is it because they don't have any food? No. Let me tell you why. They worship as many as 330 million deities. Everybody's got his own. The one supreme deity that sits on the top of the pile is the deity who comes by three names depending on how he manifests himself or she, Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva are the three different names of this supreme deity. But under that come all these plethora of gods. Now, the gods are personified in the cows of India, all right? The cows are the incarnations of the gods. That's where we get the phrase "sacred cow." They then become the center of worship. Everything which comes from a cow is sacred, including its dung and its urine. And by the way if you were to see a pious low caste Hindu on the streets catching the urine of a cow in his hands and sipping it, you wouldn't be surprised, if you understood the religion, because that's rather common.

To kill and eat a cow is worse to a Hindu than cannibalism, because a cow is a deity, and cows eat 20 percent of the food supply of India. By the way, they have rest homes for old cows, who cease to give milk. They don't have rest homes for old people, just old cows. Every cow eats enough for seven people, and the cows in India number 200 million. That means that they eat enough food to feed 1,400,000 people. That means that India produces enough food, so that if you just moved the cows out or better, ate them, you could move everybody into India from the continent of Antarctica, Australia, Africa and Europe and everybody from most of the other nations of the world, and everybody would have more to eat than the people in India have now and they have enough.

Fifteen percent of all the food supply of India is eaten by mice, and nobody kills mice either, because you might be killing your grandfather. Let me tell you how you've saved in the Hindu system. You're saved by stopping your births. They believe in reincarnation, so you're just born over and over and over and over and over and over. And nirvana, or the state of nothingness that you desire to reach is when you don't get born anymore because you've gone as high as you can go, and you enter into nirvana. And so they are constantly being cycled through these births. Now, you can be being born in the animal kingdom or the people kingdom, and that's why they have the caste sys-tem because you keep wanting to get higher and higher in the caste sys-tem. If you drop down into the animal kingdom because you've done some bad things while you were a human, there are 84,000 different levels of animal kingdoms that you can go through to get out of them again.

And so all of the animals, you see, are somebody re-incarnated on his way up or down. You don't want to kill an animal, because you might be messing up the cycle of karma, by pushing some-one

else into another life that is not intended for them, and you'll be in trouble and you'll be an animal next time around.

Salvation then comes through this endless cycle of births until they reach nirvana. The social effects of this are beyond description. You see a poor, destitute, wretched, individual with nothing, and you don't meet his need because the only way that person can get from that lev-el to the next level up is to do penance at that level. And so you leave the person in that situation because that's their karma, and if you relieve their penance, if you relieve their situation, then you have taken away the penalty they are supposed paying for. They're not going to get back at the next level, you see?

So there's no re-gard for human life at all. When you see a beggar, a typical Hindu response is, I wonder what he did to deserve that? I hope he can work himself out of it. So you see, what has deprived India is not a lack of food supply. What has deprived India is paganism. Without a Christian heritage, without the power of God in that society through the influence of believing people, there is no proper view of man as created in the image of God, and that is his own damnation. God feeds His people, and God also feeds those who aren't even is people when they hang around with His people. Apart from belonging to Him, there's no guarantee that there's any supply.

Now, all I'm trying to get you to see is that the problems in the world are not the problems of a lack of resource, and I'm going to talk more about that when we get to chapter 6 later on. There's plenty available for us in this world. I'm not sure that I believe all of these people who are prophets of doom telling us we're running out of food, and I'll tell you why in a few weeks. But I do know this, there isn't ever going to be enough for the world of people who don't know God because God is the source, you see?

Now, look with me for a minute at Matthew 6:25. And I just want to be very specific about this text although we'll cover it in the future in detail. Since God says, look just say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and move on; the idea that we don't need to spend a lot of time on that is really planted in our minds. God, now watch this, God does not want us to preoccupy ourselves with the physical. Physical preoccupation, physical need is the lowest level of human need. The need for physical resource is the lowest level of human need. God does not want us occupied on that level. So He is saying, "I will take care of that." "Therefore – " verse 25 " - I say to you, don't you worry about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or what you shall put on," your health, as such. He takes care of the birds, verse 26. He takes care of the lilies, verse 28, 29. He takes care of the grass, verse 30. "Then why are you – " in verse 31 " - worrying about what we'll eat? What we'll drink? Or what we'll be clothed with?" Watch verse 32, "For all these things do the pagans seek."

You see, this is life without God. It is on the physical level, and that's all it is. "But your Father knows you have need of these things." God knows that He must supply the physical needs. That's going to be taken care of. Verse 35, "You seek first – " what? " - the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,

and all these things shall – " what? " - be added." You let God take care of the low level of human need, the physical. He says, you get your mind on the spiritual. God doesn't want us dealing on the low level. Paul says, "Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth." It's the same idea. I believe that the reason God says, I will take over this area if you'll just acknowledge that I'm the source of it; I'll take over this area so that you don't have to get stuck at that level, and you invest your life in the kingdom and in the matter of righteous, and all the rest of that stuff will take care of itself, as I deal with it. That's a tremendous principle people. The world the pagans seek after the human level the physical level. We don't because God promises to supply that for us. How does He supply it?

Well, two ways, basically. One, and this is the first way, Genesis 3:19, "Man is to earn his bread by the sweat of his face." Now we're not supposed to say, "Oh, I'm busy being spiritual and I'm waiting for the ravens." See, that's not the idea. "Could you grow me a gourd, Lord, it's warm out here. Need some shade." No. We have a high enough value of ourselves and of our own life before God to be obedient to Him and to work, do what we need to do, to feed ourselves and to stay healthy. We are to work. We're not just sitting around. In fact, I Timothy 5:8 says, "If a man doesn't provide for his own household he's worse than an infidel." So we are to work. We are to be committed to that kind of involvement. And then, I think Paul really hits the nail on the head in II Thessalonians where he says in chapter 3 and verse 10, this, "For even when we were with you we commanded you this that if any would not work neither should he - " what? " – eat." You don't work, you don't eat. "We hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all but are busybodies. Now then, they that are such command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." So there is the commitment then that we work and eat our own bread. But there's a beautiful balance to that. There are some who can't work or who are infirmed or who have needs or for whatever reasons, and then we also have to meet their needs as well.

And so there is almost a balance here. While on the one hand, Paul's heart goes out to those who are in need to the point where he'll scour all over Asia Minor collecting money to take back to the poor saints of Jerusalem; and he will be involved energetically in the promotion of a collection to meet the needs of poor people, but at the same time he has no sympathy for someone who is simply poor because they won't work. So, God will supply our needs through our own efforts and through the generosity and the graciousness and the goodness and the kindness of others around us.

Now, beloved, it's a wonderful thing to know that God is going to supply our physical needs, but I have to add one other footnote. Somebody will invariably say, "Well, what about in Hebrews 11 when you have all of those people who are the saints of God of the highest order of whom the world was not worthy and they were persecuted and slaughtered and they went without places to sleep, and they had no place to rest, and they had no food, and they were destitute, forsaken and naked and so forth?" Doesn't that contradict the whole deal? No, this is pretty simple really. God only supplies your needs until it's time for you to die. That's all. And then He may choose that the way you go home to

be with Him is through the lack of the sufficiency. But until that time in His sovereign plan your needs will be met, and only God knows the specific dimension of what those needs are. God takes care of the physical until such a time as the physical life ends, and then we enter into an abundance that's inconceivable.

It's very much like Matthew 18 where it talks about little children, and it says, "Their angels do constantly watch over them." Then the question often comes, well, what about when a child dies? Does that mean the angel was asleep on the job? No, the angel only fulfills his function until the sovereignty of God deems that life should end. You see? In other words, God says, "MacArthur, you have so much time in My sovereign plan and you're called to a task. Now if you will set your heart and your mind on My Kingdom and My righteousness and the things above I will meet your physical needs." And I believe that with all my heart, so that the pre-occupation in my life is not the physical. And when the Lord sees fit to remove the physical protection, I'm going to go out of existence in this world but I'm going to enter into a fullness of existence in the next world that will give me a supply of eternal resources like I've never dreamed of.

And so when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," what are we saying? We are trusting God as the source to supply all the physical needs of our lives and we are affirming that because we are His children and because we are walking in righteousness and walking in obedience and walking in a willing submission to His will, we know that He will take care of all those things. And we lift up our hearts in gratitude while setting our affections on things above.

So, what is it that we seek as substance? Bread. And who is the source? God. And what is our supplication? Give. Let me give you two other finals. The seekers. Who are the seekers? Us. I can't help but stress that "give us"; not "give me my daily bread" because the church of Christ is not isolated. The use of the plural precludes all selfishness in our prayers. And I really believe the prayer "give us" just embodies all the Christian community. It is saying, in effect, that I could never have an abundance while my brother had less than enough. Right? It just encompasses that whole concept of sharing.

And so the substance is bread, and the source is God, and the supplication is give, and the seeker is us and finally the schedule. "Give us," how often? "This day." This day. The exact meaning of this concept is simply bread for the coming day. In its simplicity, in its moderation, in its very beauty, it is an expression that says one day at a time. Father, I accept Your provision. It stresses the contentment that comes when we live with a day by day confidence in God and don't worry about the future.

Let me give you just a little hint. Most Christians who worry, worry about what hasn't happened. That's right. Because they're not too sure God's going to provide their daily bread tomorrow. That's doubting His Word. This doesn't mean you don't save. You've got to be like the ant, Proverbs says,

and plan for the future. This doesn't mean you don't plan, but it does mean you're content to trust God to meet your need in the future. We say "Oh, what's going to happen when that comes to pass? Oh, what if this? Oh, what if that?" We only ask for physical provisions for this day.

Prayer then, beloved, focuses on God as the One who provides. It acknowledges that He is the source of all our physical needs, and it teaches us to live one day at a time in the confidence that He will meet these needs. What a great, great, petition it is. I trust as we pray every day we will pray in confidence that we can focus on the spiritual levels because God is graciously caring for the physical. Oh, don't get bogged down in the physical. Don't get your thought patterns at that level. Don't lose your joy and your opportunity to minister by getting all wrapped up in the mundane. Set your affections on things above. Seek ye first the Kingdom, and let God take care of the rest.

You know, let me just say this in closing because I think it's so important. A lot of talk today about feeding the hungry and feeding the poor, but you know what I believe? I believe that's good and necessary, but I believe it's better to give someone Jesus Christ than to give them food. If I give a man food, he'll be hungry the next day. If I give him Jesus Christ, God will take care of him from there on through eternity. That's most needful. And one of the things we can promise to you is that God will take you under His watch care as a loving Father when you enter into a relationship with His Son. That's a glorious truth. Let's pray.

Father, we realize our utter dependence on You. We realize that if You so willed it, we would have no daily bread. You could withhold the sun and its influence. You could stop the rain. You could make this land absolutely barren so that the farmer with all his modern implements and chemicals couldn't raise a crop. You could blast that crop if You wanted to. We are absolutely in Your hand. And I guess, Lord, one of the follies of this twentieth century is the stupidity of thinking that we have acquired a certain amount of knowledge and so we're independent of God.

Father, we can't live a day without You. Nothing would continue were it not sustained and kept by You. Give us this day our daily bread. Teach us that it's a good thing at least once a day, and I guess the oftener the better, to remind ourselves that our times and our health and our home and our clothes and our food are good gifts from Your gracious hand that come constantly to the one who trusts in the Lord and does good.

And so teach us to give ourselves to the spiritual and know You'll meet that other dimension. And may we know that even that work that we do is a spiritual offering to You when it's done for Your glory. Thank You, Lord, for all that You've given us, and for just opening to us the fullness of these truths. Continue to teach us as we search the Scripture in Christ's name. Amen.

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