

Give Us Our Daily Bread, Prayer (Part 8)

Matthew 6:11

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This morning we come back to Matthew 6, and to these powerful words of our Lord's, this example of prayer for each of us. My own heart has been affected in the matter of prayer as a result of our study, and it's a joy to come back to it again this morning.

As I was growing up, I've had the opportunity, as many of you may have, to see a film called *Shenandoah*. *Shenandoah* was a film in which James Stewart plays a Virginia farmer during the time of the Civil War, and his large family is divided and really, destroyed, decimated, through the terrible result and outcome of the Civil War. As the film begins, he's a recent widower. On her deathbed, his wife made him promise to raise their seven children as "good Christians." And Stewart, in the film, tries his best to honor his wife's request.

The movie begins with what I think is an unforgettable scene. The family is seated around the dinner table, and Stewart, feeling the pressure of his wife's request to raise them as good Christians, recognizes the fact that he really should say grace or a word of thanks before the meal. And so, this family gathered for prayer, directed by Stewart, lifts up their prayers to God. Here's what Stewart prayed:

"Lord, we cleared this land, we ploughed it, sowed it, and harvested it; we cooked the harvest; it wouldn't be here, and we wouldn't be eating it if we hadn't done it all ourselves. We worked dog-bone hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you just the same for this food we're about to eat. Amen."

You know, not only is that humorous, as he sort of tries to honor his wife's wishes and begrudgingly gives thanks, but it is also a brilliant description of the unregenerate heart. You see, unbelievers do often offer some grudging expression of thanks to God, but they assign much of it to their own credit, to their own personal efforts, to their own intelligence. And what they absolutely refuse to acknowledge is the smallest molecule of dependence for God. That stands in diametric opposition to the heart of the genuine Christian. In fact, as we come back to The Lord's Prayer, in the fourth petition that we'll look at today, Jesus explains that an attitude of

dependence and reliance on God must be fostered every single day by every believer in Jesus Christ. I hope you come to commit the words of this prayer to memory, but you follow along as I read it. Matthew 6:9:

‘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. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.】’]

As we have learned over the weeks since we began this study the first of January, this magnificent prayer contains three parts: a preface, then the petitions, followed by a conclusion. The preface reminds us that when we approach God, we must come before Him with the right attitude: “Our Father who is in heaven...” As John Piper writes:

“Most of us are prone to bluster into the throne room of heaven as into a hardware store with a broken piece of plumbing, rather than the joyful wonder that we are only admitted here only by the blood of Christ, and that we come to the greatest Being in the universe.”

The preface reminds us to stop and to think about what it is we’re actually doing. We studied that preface in great detail the past weeks. Then there are six petitions. Each of these petitions provides us with an outline, if you will, of an entire area of prayer. Each petition provides us with a category into which our prayers should flow. The first three of the six remind us that prayer is not primarily about us.

Jesus tells us that when we pray, our prayer should begin with the glory of God. “Hallowed be Your name.” [May Your name, God, be set apart. May You be glorified in the earth, in my life and all that happens in Your universe.]

Jesus tells us secondly, we’re to pray for the kingdom of God. “Your kingdom come.” that is, may Your kingdom advance heart by heart, and may Your kingdom grow in my heart. And may You quickly bring in the literal, physical kingdom of Christ, in which He will reign upon the earth.

Thirdly, we learn that we are to pray for the will of God. “Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.” We learned last week that means we must first deny all other wills, including our own, and then it means we must willingly accept, wholeheartedly accept, God’s sovereign will for our lives, embrace it, and we must also, in a disciplined way, pursue a life of obedience to the revealed will of God, as it’s laid down in Scripture.

Those are the first three petitions, and they are all about God. Today, we begin to study the final three petitions, and these are about us, and our needs, and the issues of our lives.

Jesus says that we are to pray for the needs of life. This is the fourth petition. For the needs of life, verse 11, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

The fifth petition is for the confession of sin. “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Verse 12)

And then the final category of petitions or prayers, I call the pursuit of holiness. Verse 13, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Now those three petitions, the needs of life, the confession of sin, the pursuit of holiness, are intended to be all-inclusive. As Martin Lloyd Jones wrote, “our whole life is found in those three petitions.” There is not a single prayer you will ever pray for anything that you need from God, that doesn’t fall within those three categories.

As we begin to pray about our own needs and our own concerns, it’s important that we remember that this does not mean, now that we’re moving to the second three requests, that we can now forget about the first three requests. It doesn’t mean that we can forget about God’s glory, and God’s kingdom, and God’s will, and just pray for whatever it is we want. No, the final three petitions must always be prayed in the light of the first three. God, even as I ask for what I need and what I want, I am asking that Your glory would be furthered, that Your kingdom would be advanced, and that Your will would be done in my life.

Now this morning, I want us to consider for a few minutes that familiar fourth petition. Notice verse 11: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Every word in that brief request speaks to us with rich meaning, and exposes us, frankly, to some of the deepest truths in Scripture. In these seven English words, eight in the Greek text, we discover several attitude-altering, mind-bending, life-changing spiritual lessons. And I want us to look at those lessons this morning.

The first lesson that we see in this request is a lesson in grace. The word, “give” that opens verse 11 reminds us that everything we have comes to us from God, and it comes to us as a gift of His grace. “Give,” we’re opening up our mouths as if it were to God and asking Him to fill them. Everything we have and receive is a gift from God. Now, understand as I begin this that does not mean acknowledging that reality, and asking God to give, does not mean that I now have an excuse for personal laziness. Go back to the Garden of Eden. Go back before the fall: before man ever fell into sin, there was work. God had a job for Adam and Eve to do. Work is not part of the fall, as I often like to say, the fall is what made work, *work*. But the concept of work is a good gift of God and it’s to be a part of our lives, and so to pray, “God, give me” is not to say “God, I’m going to wait till you give me.” In fact, in Genesis 3:19, after the fall, Jesus, excuse me, well I do believe it was actually Jesus, second person of the Trinity, but God says to Adam, “By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread till you return to the ground.” This was God’s design, that work would be a part of our lives. Paul couldn’t put it more bluntly, than he put it in 2 Thessalonians :3, when he said,

... when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.” [Pretty direct. He goes on to say,] “For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in a quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

So, the fact that we rely on God’s grace to give us all that we need, doesn’t excuse us from responsibility. In fact, John Calvin comments in his commentary on this passage in these compelling words:

“The fields must no doubt be cultivated. Labor must be bestowed on gathering the fruits of the earth, and every man must submit to the toil of his calling, in order to procure food. But this does not hinder us from being fed by the undeserved kindness of God, without which men might waste their strength to no purpose. We are thus taught, that what we seem to have acquired by our own industry is His gift.”

You see, this fourth petition is a transparent acknowledgement that God provides everything we need to sustain life, and it is because of His work, that it actually does sustain life. Scripture constantly hammers the reality that God is the source of everything in this life. God is the one who gives life, and sustains life. In Acts 14:15 to 17, Paul, talking to the pagans there, says, “I

want you to worship the living God who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, the God who did not leave Himself without a witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven, and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Even unbelievers, their lives are sustained by the goodness of God. He gives and sustains life. Paul in his sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17:28, says that our God is the ground of all life: “in Him we live.” Our God is the ground of all action: in Him we move. And our God is the ground of all being: in Him we have our being. God provides everything we need in life. Not only does He give us life, but He provides everything that we need in life.

In that same sermon, in Acts 17:25, he tells the philosophers there, that God is the one, the one I am talking about, the true God, the unknown God to you, is the one that gives you life and breath, and all things. Have you ever thought that God, as an expression of His goodness, gives breath to mankind, to you? And “all things ,” that’s sort of comprehensive, there is absolutely nothing good in your life, that doesn’t come to you from God.

James puts it this way, in 1:17: “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” You see, God is the one who’s given us this earth, who’s given us the natural resources, from which everything we enjoy is made. God sustains the laws, on which all of our technology and invention rest. The fact that everything we enjoy operates the same each time is because God has set up a series of natural laws that He sustains. Colossians 1:17: in Jesus Christ all things hold together. But not only has God given us this planet, and all the resources that are here, but God gives men specific skills not only for their own livelihood, their own support, but for the benefit of other men.

In Exodus 31:6, Moses, speaking of those men who had specific gifts and talents to build the tabernacle, says this: in the hearts of all those who are skillful, I, this is God speaking, have put skill. If you have a gift or a skill that you use to support yourself, and you use for the benefit of other people, that gift is a gift given to you by God. That’s a skill from God. God in His common grace allows men to discover the laws He’s put in place, and to use their God-given skills to harness them for mankind’s benefit. I am reminded of this every time I go to the hospital. Walk in the hospital, and I see the expression of God’s common grace to mankind by giving us laws that always work the same, giving us talented men gifted in certain skills, who discover how to harness those laws and make pieces of equipment, develop surgeries, make medicines. These all are expression of God’s goodness to mankind. Whether you’re talking about the conveniences that you enjoy, transportation, or in your home, or for your own

enjoyment, the enjoyment of music, all of these things are an expression of God, and His goodness to man, giving skills and resources to mankind. And ultimately, it is God who gives us the power to work, the strength to work, and grants the power to gain financial wealth or stability, to whatever degree we have it.

Turn back to Deuteronomy 8. Moses makes this point to the children of Israel, as they gathered after their forty years of wilderness wandering, they are gathered on the plains outside of Jericho. Deuteronomy 8:16: he says “In the wilderness God fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you,” I love this, “to do good for you in the end.” Verse 17, “Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.” This is a constant, repetitive theme of Scripture.

To whatever degree you enjoy financial security and stability, it is the gift of God to you. Let me ask you: Do you take any for your financial condition, for your financial prosperity, to whatever degree you have it? Although you may never breathe a word to anyone else, do you really believe in your heart of hearts, that it’s your own hard work, your own ingenuity, your own intelligence, your own gifts, that are the real story of your success? If you’re tempted to think that way, let me encourage you to take a little exercise this week. Set aside some time at some point, and then write out the factors that you believe had directly contributed to your success. And then I want you to take that list and cross off of it all those things that you have received as a gift from God or others. If you’re honest with yourself, you’ll discover that in reality, God and others are actually responsible for every accomplishment you have ever achieved.

Jesus teaches us to pray daily, asking God to give as a gift of His grace all that we need for that day. “Give us.” And this forces us every day to face the lesson of grace. “Father, open up your hand, and give me what I need today.” So this petition sets before us a lesson in grace, but secondly, we see a lesson in love: “Give us.” Like all the requests about our needs in The Lord’s Prayer, this one is plural. It doesn’t say “Give me,” it says, “Give us.” We may pray in private, but we are never to pray in isolation. Here, our Lord reminds us that when we pray for the needs of this life, we have a responsibility to pray not only for our own, but also for the needs of others. When we pray, “Give us our daily bread,” we should be praying that God would supply not only our own needs, but also the needs of others. There are some specific categories in which this “us” falls. We’re obviously praying that God would meet our own needs. But we’re

also praying that God would meet the needs of this life in reference to our families. Our dependents, those who look to us for their support. Turn to 1 Timothy 5. In a context of talking about the support of widows in the church, in verse 4, Paul says “if any widow has children or grandchildren, they” that is, the children or grandchildren, “must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.”

In other words, we have a responsibility not only to meet our own needs, or to ask God to meet our own needs, but we also have a responsibility to ask God to help meet the needs of our dependents, in this specific case, our dependents, our aging parents and grandparents, for whom we have a responsibility. That of course includes our immediate families: our spouses and our children.

Notice verse 8: “... if anyone does not provide for his own,” in other words, there are those who aren’t caring in this context for their aging parents and grandparents, certainly for their own immediate families would be understood here, “and especially for those of his household,” this is where he makes it very clear and direct, those who live under your roof, those who are your physical dependents, “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” We have a responsibility in this request, “Give us this day our daily bread,” to include not only ourselves, but also those who are our immediate dependents, who look to us for their care. But beyond that, we also have a responsibility for other believers. This “us” includes ourselves, it includes our families, and it also includes other believers.

Turn back a few pages to Galatians 6:10. In verse 9, Paul talks about doing good, and in verse 10 he says, “... while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Fellow believers. We have a responsibility to one another, to care for one another. James makes this point very clear in the chapter we looked at just before Christmas: 2:15. Here, he is using an illustration to illustrate the difference between dead and living faith. In verse 15, he says,

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

James is essentially saying here, obviously, you and I have a responsibility to fellow believers. In 1 John 3, the apostle puts it in no uncertain terms. First John 3:17,

... whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

So, you and I have a responsibility beyond our own good, our own physical needs, we have a responsibility for our families, to our dependents, and we also have a responsibility for other believers.

But beyond that, we have a responsibility for all who are in need, and when we pray “Father, give us”, they are included as well. Not merely ourselves, not merely our families, not even merely fellow believers, but *all* men who find themselves in need. Doesn't God express for that kind of care for His creatures? In Galatians 6:10 that I read to you a moment ago, it says, do good to believers, yes especially to them, but do good to all men. You remember the Old Testament laws that required a person who was harvesting the grain from their field, of course that was primarily an agricultural society. So, this was how they made their livelihood. And the law said that if you were harvesting that field, you were to leave the corners of the field unharvested, and any grain that you dropped in the process of the harvesting were to be left, and you weren't to go back and sort of, clean it all up for yourself, but you were to leave that, so that the poor in your community could be fed. They could come, and they could harvest it, and they could make bread.

But this is not merely an Old Testament stipulation. This is a New Testament one as well. Look at Ephesians 4:1—Ephesians 4:28. Paul is here giving instructions to those who used to steal, but in so doing he gives to us all that Christian work is to be about. He says, “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor,” now here's how we're to labor, “performing with his own hands what is good,” in order “that he will have something to share with one who has need.” You and I have a responsibility outside of ourselves.

One of the early Church fathers writing in the 300s, Basil, writes, “The bread that is spoiling in your house belongs to the hungry. The shoes that are mildewing under your bed belong to those who have none. The clothes stored away in your trunk belong to those who are naked.” He captured exactly the heart of God in the Old and the New Testaments, that we have a responsibility outside of ourselves, and even outside of our own families, to care for those who are in need.

Are you so absorbed with your own needs that in essence you pray, “Give *me* my daily bread,” and ignore the physical and financial needs of your family, of your brothers and sisters in Christ, or even who are there around you? Jesus says we’re to pray, “Give *us*.” And it’s a lesson in love for others. In this fourth petition, Jesus wanted us to learn a lesson in grace; He wanted us to learn a lesson in love; and there’s a third lesson in this brief request: it’s a lesson in reliance. A lesson in reliance. “Give us this day....” “This day,” translates to common Greek word for “today”. “Give us today....”

Now Luke uses slightly different expression in his version of The Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11. He records it this way: “Give us according to the day....” or “Give us day by day....”, or as the *New American Standard* translates it, “Give us each day ...” Matthew says, “Give us today....” Luke says, be constantly giving us according to the day, or as appropriate for the needs of each day. Those as just slight differences, nuances in meaning. But the main point is the same: we are to pray in humble dependence each day, asking God to give us what is appropriate for the needs of that day.

By the way, this complements, back in Matthew 6, this complements what Jesus says just a few verses later. In verse 25, He says “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” And He uses several illustrations for how God provides for grass, and birds, and in verse 34, “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Don’t worry about the food or clothing you need for tomorrow. Now, that doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t be wise; doesn’t mean we shouldn’t save; doesn’t mean we shouldn’t plan. All of those things God demands in other contexts. What Jesus is saying is that we’re not to be anxious for, or worried about, the future. Instead, we are to pray for each day’s needs to be met.

Now, let’s be honest with each other. We have a hard time praying this prayer. And in fact, there’s an important question this request raises, which no one of us wants to voice, but we’re all tempted to think. And that is, why should we in twenty first century America pray for today’s bread? When we shop at Costco, and we have enough food in our cupboards to feed five families for five months? Why should I say, “God, give me today my daily bread”? Why should we pray that God would take care of our financial needs today when we have several months’ income locked away in some bank or in a series of financial investments? Doesn’t it seem a bit disingenuous? Doesn’t it seem superfluous for us? Absolutely not. This is a prayer Jesus says every Christian in every age, regardless of his circumstances should pray. And there are couple

of reasons that you and I had better think like this, and that we had better pray like this, that is, with a spirit of dependence and reliance on God.

First reason is that God is the one who enables us to benefit from whatever it is we have. I am reminded of the words of the prophet Haggai. You remember the people had refused to build the temple. And this is what Haggai said to them: Haggai 1:6: “You have sown much, but harvest little. You eat, but there’s not enough to be satisfied. You drink, but there’s not enough to become drunk. You put on clothing, but no one is warm enough.” And see if this is your biography: “And he who earns, earns wages, to put into a purse with holes.” Ever feel like that? You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home God says “I’d blow it away.” You see, God was telling them, “Listen, you can work as hard as you want to work, and you can even gain all that you want to gain, but if I don’t add my blessing to what you have, then you won’t enjoy it. And it will never be enough.”

But there’s another reason that you and I ought to pray this prayer regardless of our affluent lifestyles in America, regardless of how full our cupboards are, and regardless of how rich our bank accounts are. It’s because God could take it all away in a moment. The most obvious biblical example of this of course is Job. One day, Job is one of the ancient world’s wealthiest men. And the next day, he’s absolutely destitute and bankrupt, with only a worthless, complaining wife. Perhaps you’ve seen the same story from riches to rags played out in the life of someone you know.

When I was thinking about this this week, my mind went to one of the good friends I left in California: a man by the name of Bob. Bob owns a very successful business there. In fact, he has several plants scattered around the US. And he makes plumbing parts. You can see them in Home Depot if you’re interested in that kind of thing. In fact, like me, you may have several of his parts in your house inside the walls or out in the lawn under your sprinkler system. Bob is one of the most thoroughly Christian men I have ever known. And he’s extremely meticulous about the product that his company produces because he sees it as part of his testimony.

But several years ago, in spite of the tight controls that Bob had put in place, one day, fittings came off the assembly line made with a flawed mixture of ingredients. Just one day in his company’s multi-year history. And those weakened parts were distributed across the country. And they were installed inside the walls of new homes, and new apartments, and new businesses. A few months later, Bob began receiving a flood of claims for water damage that resulted when those flawed parts failed. His liability insurance company, which was supposed to care for this,

initially escaped through a loophole in their contract, and Bob found himself in a desperate situation. Having to pay out of his own pocket and his company's pocket, millions of dollars in claims because as he said, "It's the right thing to do." There were months I remember sitting at Starbucks across a cup of coffee from Bob, and he's telling me that he thought he was going to have to close the company, and then spend years working to pay back those who'd been hurt.

My point is, like Job or like Bob, no matter how successful we may be, everything on which we rely can be gone in a moment's time. Listen again, to John Calvin in his commentary on this passage. He says,

"These words remind us that unless God feed us daily, the largest accumulation of the necessaries of life will be of no avail. Though we may have abundance of corn and wine, and everything else, unless they are watered by the secret blessing of God, they will suddenly vanish. Or we will be deprived of the use of them. Or they will lose their natural power to support us, so that we shall famish in the midst of plenty."

Let me ask you: do you really understand that? Do you cultivate a dependent spirit? Or let me put it more pointedly: is there anything that you rely on every day, other than God? Do you trust your investments? Do you trust the stock market? Do you trust your bank account? Your insurance? Your full cupboard and freezers? *Where is your trust?*

God says, "Put your daily trust for what you need in this life in Me, and in Me alone." There are so many passages that speak to this, I would love to take you to many of them, but in the interest of time I'll just take you to two. Turn to Psalm 33. This whole point of reliance on God, rather than on ourselves and our own resources. Psalm 33:13: "The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works. he king is not saved by a mighty army;"

Now, if you're a king, where do you put your reliance? On your army; you want it to be strong. Where does our country put its strength and its hope, its reliance? On our army, our military. They can deliver us. Verse 16, the second half: "A warrior is not delivered by great strength." If you're a warrior, where do you put your reliance? On your physical conditioning, on your preparation for the battle, perhaps on your weapons? That's verse 17: "A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength."

You see, in the ancient world, a horse was the equivalent of an F-15, or a tank, or some of our modern equipment. And that's where they wanted to put their hope, their confidence. God says it's not the place to put your reliance. "Behold," verse 18: "the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness," There's where our hope comes: this is the equivalent of, "Give us this day our daily bread." to hope on God's lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death, and He is the one who keeps them alive in famine.

Where is your reliance? If it's on anything other than God, this request is intended to bring you back to sober reality every day. "Give us today our daily bread."

The people of God in the Old Testament were constantly relying on something or someone other than God; usually, it was on the countries around them. When they got into difficult times, when they saw that they were threatened militarily, rather than crying out to God, what do they do? They ran to one of the neighboring countries, and they made some sort of a political compact, a political agreement, an alliance, to protect them. And God is constantly bringing this to their attention and telling them, "This is absolutely wrong."

Turn to Isaiah 31, Isaiah 31: 1. Here they've turned to Egypt. They're relying on Egypt for help. They've got a big army; they'll help us.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help *And* rely on horses, *And* trust in chariots because they are many *And* in horsemen because they are very strong, *But* they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD! Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster *And* does not retract His words, *But* will arise against the house of evildoers and against the help of the workers of iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit.... [You know what God is saying? What are you thinking? Whatever it is you're relying on, it can't help you!] "So the LORD will stretch out His hand, *And* he who helps will stumble" [that's the Egyptians,] "And he who is helped will fall, " [that's the Israelites] *And* all of them will come to an end together."

Where is your reliance? What is it today, and every day, which gives you peace and comfort when you think about it? Where is it, that you find your strength? If it's anything but God, you are on sinking sand. To ask God to give us today what we need is a forthright acknowledgement of our utter dependence and reliance on Him. It's a lesson in reliance.

There's one final lesson that's contained in these familiar words, "Give us this day our daily bread." It's a lesson in contentment. "Give us this day our daily bread." The Greek word translated "daily" is an extremely difficult word to understand. It seems pretty obvious on the face of it, but this word is used only here in the New Testament and in Luke 11:3, in that same petition in The Lord's Prayer. It occurs nowhere else in the Greek language before these gospels were written, neither in the Septuagint nor in secular Greek. And in fact, the early church father Origen said that Matthew and Luke must have made it up. And perhaps they did. So, there's nowhere for us to look how this word is used in its context, so we have to rely for a definition on its etymology, that is, the components of the word and what those components mean, which if you have any knowledge of the language you know it's a faulty sort of base to put your hopes, because words change in meaning over time.

But there are three options that you will see there in commentaries, or translations or study Bibles, as to what this word "daily" means. First of all, it could mean "that which is necessary for being, or survival". In other words, "God, give us today the bread that we need for our continued survival." A second option is, it could mean, "for the coming day": for the day to come. And so, it's prayer that in the coming day, God would give us the bread we need. A third option is simply the way it's translated in the *New American Standard*: "daily". This is how Tyndale, back in 1525, the first English printed translation of the New Testament, this is how he translated it. And it stuck. And it's probably the best translation: "daily".

Recent archeological discovery confirms Tyndale's translation: back in the last century, an Egyptian papyrus was discovered; it had this word translated "daily" used in the context of an accounting of daily rations of food. Isn't that interesting? I mean it's essentially that's what it's saying: "God, give us the rations that we need for today."

But in the end, whichever of these options you take, it doesn't really matter, because the stress is essentially the same in all of them: "Lord, give me what I need for today." Give me the bread I need for today. Now, what does He mean by "bread"? Many of the early church fathers couldn't believe that Jesus would transition from the glory of God and the kingdom of God and the will of God, to something so mundane and earthy as literal, physical bread. So, Origen said this must be the Bread, which is the Word of God. Jerome said, "well, this must be the bread which is part of the Lord's table". What is this word, "bread"?

Well, the Greek word that's used here is the word that's most commonly used in the New Testament for literal bread. In the first century, bread was usually made from barley flour, and

occasionally from more expensive wheat flour. It had oil added to it and yeast, and the product was a flat loaf, about one centimeter thick, and about fifty centimeters in diameter. It was the chief food stuff of the early life in the first century, just as it is to many of you today. Many of you subsist on pasta and bread. The word is also used, in addition to literal bread, of food in general. For example, in Mark 3:20, it's translated as "meal": as a meal. But I think in addition, here it also includes, by extension and by application, all those things that are necessary to physical life and existence in the world.

That's what we're supposed to pray for. "Lord, give us today everything we need for continued physical life and existence in the world." It includes food, and clothing, and shelter, and health, and physical strength, a strong mind, gainful employment, all of those things that are necessary for continued life and existence in our world. And we are to pray about the details of all those things. We are to ask God to give us, and others, food, and clothing, and shelter, and health, and physical strength, and strong minds, gainful employment, etc. And notice where Jesus puts the stress here: He says, "Give us today our daily bread." You see, we not only have to cultivate a spirit of dependence, or reliance, but we also have to cultivate a spirit of contentment. We're not to pray for tomorrow's, next week's, next year's, retirement's bread. We're to be content with asking for this day's bread. It's the spirit of Proverbs 30:8:

... Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion,
that I not be full and deny *You* and say, "Who is the LORD? Or that I not be in
want and steal, and profane the name of my God.

There's really a great object lesson of this idea in the manna that fell. If we had time, I'd take you back to Exodus 16. In Exodus 16, you remember that God sent manna to the children of Israel in the wilderness. And He tells them, "Look, when it falls like dew in the morning, I want you to go out and gather just enough for that day. And if you gather more than you need for the day, guess what's going to happen to it: it's going to literally rot and melt away, if you try to take more than just that day's worth." That's the powerful illustration of what our Lord is teaching us to pray here. "God, give me what I need to continue life today."

It's what Paul says in 1 Timothy. In fact, turn there for a moment. First Timothy 6:8. He says, "If we have food and covering" "covering" maybe a reference to clothing, could be a reference to shelter, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." And if you're not, then what you really want, verse 9, is to get rich. And those who want to get rich fall into snare, and temptation, and many hurtful and harmful, destructive desires.

Now, God sometimes gives us more than what we need. He gives us more than food and clothing. All of us fall into that category. As I've often mentioned to you, by the standards of the five billion plus people that live in the world, all of us are wealthy. We're in the top twenty percent of the world's richest people. So how are we to respond? Paul tells us later in that same chapter: 1 Timothy 6:17,

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world” [and it happens; it happens with us here] “not to be conceited” [don't for a moment believe that you are responsible for your success; don't] ... fix ... [your] “hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God,” [don't imagine that bank account is going to protect you from life's troubles; don't imagine that anything but God is your help. He's the one] “who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ... do good, to be rich in good works ... be generous... [be] ready to share, [and store] ... up for ... [yourselves] the treasure of a good foundation for the future....”

That's how we're to respond. You see, God has promised to give His people what they need. In Psalm 145:15, the psalmist says this:

“The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”

The next Psalm 146:7: “You are the one who gives food to the hungry.” And of course, we finished our study of Philippians back a year or so ago, and Philippians ends with that great verse in Philippians 4:19, that tells us that our God shall supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. This is the promise God made. Notice He promised to meet our needs; not necessarily our wants, not the luxuries of life, not make us wealthy. I like the way the Westminster shorter catechism answers what is requested in the fourth petition. Here it is: “In the fourth petition, we pray that God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life and enjoy His blessing.”

That's what we're asking. “God, give me a competent portion of the good things of this life and let me enjoy Your blessing.” What powerful lessons are contained in this petition? “Give” the lesson in grace. “Give us” a lesson in love. “Give us today” a lesson in reliance. And “Give us today our daily bread” a powerful lesson in contentment.

But you know, the greatest message in this petition is not what we receive, or what we request. It's what it tells us about God. Listen to Martin Lloyd Jones. I love this:

“If only we could grasp this fact, that the Almighty Lord of the universe is interested in us, there is not a hair of my head that He is not concerned about, and the smallest and the most trivial of details in my little life are known to Him on His everlasting throne. Is not this one of the most wonderful things in the whole of Scripture: That the God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, that such a God should be prepared to consider your little needs down to the minutest details of our daily bread?”

What a God we serve! “God, give us today our daily bread.”

Let's pray together.

Father, we praise You, and exalt You, for Your greatness and for Your goodness. Lord, what have we needed that You have not provided? Thank You for Your gracious promise to meet our needs, and Lord, we rejoice in Your goodness, not only in meeting our needs, but in overwhelming us with blessing upon blessing. Father, help us, even as we're reminded by the apostle, not to be conceited with the prosperity we enjoy, and not to fix our hope on these uncertain things, but on You.

Lord, help us to be rich in good works, to be generous, to be ready to share, so that we may lay a solid foundation for the future, that we may lay up, as if it were our treasure in heaven, where moths and thieves and rust can't destroy. Father, teach us these powerful lessons in grace, lessons in love, lessons in reliance on You and You alone, and the lesson of contentment. Lord, we pray that You would meet all of the physical needs that we have to sustain our lives here, today.

We pray it in Your grace and in Your Son's name. Amen.