

This Means War – Part 5

Psalm 108:13

Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

We have seen that prayer is a work we are invited to, and the invitation is to every believer. It is a call to partnership with the One who has given His life for us. It is a call to extend His Kingdom, seeing His life and light penetrate the darkness of evil that surrounds so many.

How are you going to answer that invitation?

When it comes to invitations, many of us immediately come up with our stock excuse list, which I have found mostly centers around time—not having enough of it or, in the case of a “prayer invitation,” thinking that the limited amount you do have is not enough to make a difference.

First, let me assure you: God is eternal. Time is not an issue for Him. He simply invites us to partnership and obedience. We talked in the last chapter about the fact that some “labors” are short and some are long. The fact is, He is inviting us to pray.

Second, many of us fear what we do is not enough. And let me say here: You are right. It will never be enough; because neither the invitation nor the response is based in works. They are both based in grace. In **Ephesians 2:8-10**, the Bible tells us,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Everything has been provided for us by grace; everything has been won for us on the cross of Jesus Christ—our salvation, and the good works God invites us to walk in.

So it may never “be enough,” but it also “counts.” a story about a pastor who for almost thirty years, and passionate about prayer. But when he was a young college student at the University of California, Los Angeles, he had his eye on medical school. In one of his science classes, he had to do an experiment with two beakers of clear liquids that, when combined, would turn pink.

This was a tedious experiment and involved adding one of the liquids to the other one drop at a time to determine exactly how many drops it took for the liquids to change color. He described the agonizingly slow, and seemingly mundane, task of counting drops and seeing no change. Minutes passed, drops went in, marks went on the tally sheet. Then a drop of liquid went in that changed color for a split second but then went clear. There were several more of those, when finally—the decisive drop—and in an instant everything changed.

He told this story once in a class that he taught on prayer. When he finished telling the story, he looked at the class and asked two questions:

Which drop was more important in seeing change effected?

And, when you pray . . . which prayer is more important?

Of course, there is no answer to “Which drop is more important?” because he needed every one of those drops to see the change take place.

I believe it is much the same with prayer. I do not know how prayer is “measured.” I am sure it is not measured by vain repetition, or shouting, or figuring out formulas. But there is evidence in Scripture that many things are measured by the Lord. Consider this:

When we are facing sorrow, the Bible tells us that God keeps our tears in a bottle (**see Psalm 56:8**). That is infinitely tender to me; the Lord knows what sorrow has cost you and me.

The wicked King Belshazzar was told that God had weighed him in the balances, and he had been found wanting (see **Daniel 5:27**).

In the book of **Proverbs**, the word **ponder** is from a Hebrew word that means “to weigh.” **Proverbs 20:10** says that “**Diverse weights and diverse measures, they are both alike, an abomination to the Lord.**” Why? Because God ponders, measures and judges fairly.

Sowing and reaping has something to do with measuring. **Matthew 7:2** says, “**For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**”

So which prayer matters more?

They all matter. When we accept the invitation to pray, we begin sowing the seed of seeing God’s Kingdom extended into the earth, into people’s lives.

We begin to see the darkness of “**this present evil age**” (**Galatians 1:4**) pressed back and overthrown. Paul writes, “**Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart**” (**Galatians 6:9**).

And that is where patience comes in. Prayer is real; but it is easy to discard when we do not get the answer we want as fast as we want.

Consider these words of Scripture:

Paul wrote that “**we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God**” (**Acts 14:22**).

John wrote that he was our “**brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**” (**Revelation 1:9**), and later, “**You have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary**” (**Revelation 2:3**).

James taught: **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4).**

Jude exhorted the brethren to **“contend earnestly” (Jude 1:3).**

There is a very real struggle that we are involved in. **None of this is said to discourage, but to encourage you to keep contending!**

While not every “battle” may turn out as we want it, we can rest assured that the ultimate victory has already been won on the cross of Jesus Christ. Our part of the “partnership” is to—**“continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).**

So . . . how are you going to answer the invitation?

We have been invited to **“put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12)** and penetrate the darkness, overthrowing the dark powers that seek to engulf our world.

We have been invited to intercede and see the lives of those we love changed in the name of Jesus. We have been invited into a partnership with the living, loving God of the universe—who through the cross has become our Father and now calls us to **“walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).**

There is no more certain truth than this: The darkness cannot stand before the onslaught of light.

From the inception of the **“Word becoming flesh,”** with the entry of the Light of the world coming to introduce the Kingdom, this has been declared:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to overcome it (see John 1:5)!

So, how are we to pray?

Let's look at the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13

Many people can recite the Lord's Prayer without being able to explain what it means or answer basic questions about it. I'd like to break it down very simply to help us all better understand what Jesus was teaching about prayer.

It's a Pattern, Not a Chant. Jesus said, **"This, then is HOW (not what) you should pray..."** Jesus gave it as a pattern for his followers to copy.

He did not intend for them to recite it as if they were chanting a magical incantation that would force God to do what they want him to do. The different parts of the Lord's Prayer are meant to teach us something about God, prayer, and about our need.

"Our Father in Heaven." First, we should start our prayers by recognizing that we are praying to God Almighty who is in Heaven. But at the same time, we approach him as a child approaches his loving father. God is "in Heaven," but He is our loving Heavenly Father.

Just as a respectful child approaches his father with humility and love, we also should approach praying to our Heavenly Father with humility and love rather than praying as if God is a "Cosmic Vending-Machine" who is there to give us whatever we ask for. We should start our prayers by humbly recognizing who we are and who God is.

"Hallowed be your name." We barely ever hear the word **"hallowed"** today, and most of us couldn't give a good dictionary definition for it... and yet many recite it in the Lord's Prayer without giving much thought to what we're saying in this line. **"Hallowed" literally means "to make holy" or "to demonstrate as holy."**

So when we say **"hallowed by your name,"** what we are praying is, **"show us how holy and perfect and 'different from us' you are!"** This line really is an extension of the opening acknowledgement that God is our Father in Heaven: First we recognize that God loves us and listens to us (**"Our father in heaven"**) and then we move on to recognize his holiness (**"hallowed be your name"**).

God is not our buddy whom we should carelessly address, but neither is He distant and uncaring God whom we should be terrified to pray to.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

God is the King. When we say that God is **“Sovereign,”** what we are declaring is that God really is in charge of everything. Even some atheists pray when their loved ones are in a terrible life-threatening accident. That’s because there’s just ‘something’ inside of us that tells us God is in control, and Scripture time and again affirms that idea.

The word **“will”** means the same as **“desire,”** so by praying for God’s will to be done we are praying for all that God desires to be done. If we pray but refuse to submit to God’s authority (**“your will be done...”**), then we are only deceiving ourselves and we’re not really praying the way Jesus taught his followers to pray.

As Jesus’ people pray and obey God’s will for them, his kingdom is made increasingly evident to the unbelieving world around them.

“Give us today our daily bread.” God provides. He does not give us everything we ask for, but He gives us everything we need. This doesn’t mean that people who are dying of starvation aren’t praying enough (but it does mean that others aren’t praying **“your will be done”** enough!).

God provides everything we truly need. This line points back to when God was leading Israel out of Egypt and provided the Manna from heaven each morning for them to eat. God did not give them enough to last any more than a day so that they would have to continue relying on Him to provide. Likewise, we are following Jesus each day can trust that He will provide everything I need for today; and tomorrow he will provide for everything I need tomorrow. God cares for his children and takes care of them.

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” God is the only one who can forgive sin, I think most people agree about that. In **Matthew 6:12** the Lord’s Prayer says **“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”** while **Luke 2:4** says **“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”**

Scholars agree that the reason these lines are different is because Jesus probably taught them this prayer in Aramaic (which was the commonly spoken language of the day), so when they wrote the prayer in Greek they used different words to communicate what Jesus said. This line in the prayer is significant, because we we pray we confess our sins to God and admit our need to be forgiven. **You cannot receive forgiveness if you don't admit that you need it!**

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Confessing sin to God in prayer is really important, but so is repenting from your sin. I like to think about **“Repentance”** as doing an **“About-Face”** – imagine you're walking one way, then you stop, turn around, and start walking in the opposite direction that you were walking in before – that's what repentance is like.

When we confess our sin to God we are admitting our need to be forgiven and that we have dishonored God. **Confession is great, but if we do not repent of our sin then we are doomed to repeat it.**

Praying this part of the Lord's Prayer might sound like this: **“God, I know that I have sinned by gossiping about my coworker. This does not honor you and isn't what you want from me. I want to speak well of people and not be known as a gossip or slanderer. When I am tempted to gossip, remind me of your desire for me to to speak well of people and make me a blessing rather than a discouragement.”**

It's important for us to realize that we cannot escape temptation on our own, no matter how **“good”** we are or how much self-control we have. We are fully dependent upon the Holy Spirit who lives in Christians to give us eyes that see temptation coming and feet to escape it.

“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.” Technically, this isn't in the Lord's Prayer in Scripture and therefore some traditions don't say this when they recite the Lord's Prayer.

This simply is a way of closing out the prayer while again declaring God's holiness and sovereignty. We pray for God's kingdom and power and glory to be lifted up and made more beautiful in the eyes of all people.

"Amen" is an expression that means "So be it" or "Make it so." By closing our prayers with **"Amen,"** we are declaring that we truly believe that God has heard everything we have said and that He will do it.

Play Altar Music [HERE](#)

So, lift up your head, and your eyes as well—your head, because it is to His glory that our "heads" (i.e., our authority) have been lifted, intended to be raised in hope, in faith and with love by people who believe—truly believe—that God is wholly desiring to reveal His love, life, grace and power on earth as it is in heaven.

And lift up your eyes—fixing your eyes on Him—especially in times such as ours that indicate our drawing very, very close to His appearing (see [Luke 21:28](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#)).

If we direct our vision, with faith that looks up with steadfast expectancy, not only will we be moving ever closer to the ultimate manifestation of His redemption, which is drawing near, but we will experience His "redemptive entry" into many situations that without penetrating prayer would not be realized.

So be encouraged by His Word and promise. Lay hold of what the Holy Spirit may have enlarged to your understanding, and your sense of confidence and faith in prayer.

Let's all stand.

Join hands with me, and with the hosts that are being awakened by the Spirit of God, to face this hour with understanding, boldness and a will to "warfare prayer"—always in the light of the cross, the "final conquest"—which takes those steps that will unleash the power of God's purposes and will here on earth as it is in heaven.

It is that order of believer that will penetrate the darkness—**“that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).**

With that charge, let’s move together in this promise the Word has given, and I leave with you: For with God we will do valiantly—it is He who shall tread down our enemy.

Close in prayer.