**What to Pray (Matthew 6:9-13)**

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.****10****Your kingdom come, your will be done,
    on earth as it is in heaven.****11****Give us this day our daily bread,*

***12****and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.****13****And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

 Right prayer acknowledges God’s identity and affirms our relationship with Him.

 Greetings, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we focus on the content of prayer today. Prayer is a genuine connection with our Heavenly Father, but its contents are what show its quality. Often people lift up prayers to God that are imbalanced. Either they include only praise and they don’t mention their needs, which later causes them to be angry at unanswered prayers from the Lord, or they focus so much on their personal needs that they forget to affirm the Lord’s identity by their prayers, whether declared or whispered. For these reasons, today we’re going to talk about the ideal contents of prayers, which should have both praise and also petition or request. Right prayer acknowledges God’s identity and affirms our relationship with Him. So, let’s talk about right prayer…

 When we pray, we declare God’s identity and present ourselves to Him, together with our needs. First and foremost, according to Jesus, prayer is to be a declaration of who God is. Which God will hear our prayer? It is of course the One who we call Father. God’s people in those days were oppressed, and it was usually only the fathers of families that could effectively look after and defend the other members in times of need/trouble. Because of that, the audience would have heard the concepts of “reliance” and “leaning on” through Jesus’ expression of “Our Father.” Moving to the other components of the prayer – God is in heaven – He is “higher” or beyond mankind. God is worthy to be praised, and not only at the Final Coming Kingdom, but also now, in the middle of today’s circumstances. It is the arrival of God’s Kingdom that we seek (hence the plea for His Kingdom to come). Thus, the believers hope is on the Second Coming of Christ. Father’s will needs to be done in this world – which is true worship, true obedience and true work, under His guidance (hence the declaration, “thy will be done”).

 Within this God-man relationship, however, God has also given mankind room to be free. A person can ask for his daily bread, remembering the Lord provided bread for the Israelites for 40 years on a daily basis while they journeyed through the desert. Man is free to ask for forgiveness, just as the Lord commanded the cancellation all debts (in Leviticus) every 7 years and also every 50 years all slavery or indentured servitude in the land. In the above examples, man was supposed to obey God by also cancelling the debts of his debtors. And finally, man was free to request that he not see the day of testing, because it was the Tester who would bring that upon the human being, and the enemy’s purpose was to make people fail. Man’s salvation from the Tester, Satan, is God Himself. That’s the reason why salvation is sought from Him – because final authority, power and glory is in God’s hands, to do and to establish what He desires.

 Right content in prayer awakens us to be changed and to receive answers to prayer. There was once a woman who began to pray for her husband’s salvation. She prayed for twenty years, but something else happened; exactly the opposite of what she had prayed for. She was the one who gained a faith-life, and only afterwards did her husband come to salvation and their home life change. Blessing was sought but was delayed for twenty years because the woman was not living a Godly life. When she was changed and began to live for the Lord, within a few days the answer to her prayers had already come and her husband came to faith and both began living for the Lord.

 Prayer is powerful, and it is one of our primary weapons, along with God’s Word and a life of holiness. If we declare God’s identity in prayer, and if we ask him honestly for our needs, even if we need to pray for weeks, months or years, the time will come for those prayers to be answered; sometimes they come quickly, and other times - much later than when we prefer.

 Let us present our requests before the Lord; let us release our debtors; and let us acknowledge our Father as our Creator and Caretaker. Let us approach God with balanced prayer – with genuineness, praise, a forgiving attitude towards those around us, and with our requests.

 When we pray, we declare God’s identity and present ourselves to Him, together with our needs. Right prayer acknowledges God’s identity and affirms our relationship with Him. The Lord Bless You All. Amen.