

What is Spiritual Warfare & Why Do We Need Armor?

Matthew 6:9-13

What is spiritual warfare? Simply stated it is the conflict between God's plan for us to have an overflowing and abundant life; and Satan's plan to kill our hope, steal our joy, and destroy our usefulness to God.

The Bible is the most amazingly engineered communication ever designed. Every word of God was breathed out by God, recorded by one of His chosen writers, and intricately woven together with every other word of all sixty-six books. That's why as open to the Lord's Prayer in Mt. 6:9-13, we are amazed as we step back and see the setting.

1. THE SETTING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Remember all the spiritual warfare surrounding those chapters before the Lord's Prayer? Jesus is promised as God with us in Matthew 1, *while Joseph is being buffeted with doubts from Satan to put away Mary.*

Jesus arrives in Matthew 2, *with Satan seeking to destroy Him by Herod's plot.*

Jesus launches His ministry in Matthew 4, *after being fiercely tempted by Satan seeking to destroy Christ's ministry before it even starts.*

Jesus then described His Father in Matthew 5-6, *as the One seated on the Throne Who can deliver us from the evil one who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy our usefulness to God.*

Jesus said God the Father is:

2. THE TARGET OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

In Matthew 5:16, ***The One on the Throne of Heaven is God the Father*** (as Jesus makes clear in v.34 "Heaven is God's Throne").

v.16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify ***your Father in heaven.*** v.34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by ***heaven, for it is God's throne;***

In Matthew 5:45, ***Our Father is Kind.***

In Matthew 5:48, ***Our Father is Perfect.***

In Matthew 6:1,3-4a, ***Our Father gives Rewards*** to those who give to the needy secretly, not for selfish gain.

In Matthew 6:4b,6, ***Our Father sees everything,*** hears prayers, and is everywhere present.

In Matthew 6:8, ***Our Father Knows our Needs.***

In Matthew 6:9, **Our Father is the One to Whom we Direct our Prayers.**

In Matthew 6:14, **Our Father Forgives Sins.**

In Matthew 6:26-32, **Our Father Cares Deeply for Us.**

So right in the midst of that flow comes:

3. THE CONTENT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER IS CHRIST'S CHECKLIST FOR DAILY SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Simply stated, the Lord's Prayer is a pattern for us, a check list for our daily spiritual health. Living a healthy, useful life each day is built around these key elements:

1. Daily **Worship** of Almighty God: Our Father
2. Daily **Consecration** of My Body: Thy Kingdom Come
3. Daily **Submission** to God's Will: Thy Will Be Done
4. Daily **Reliance** on God's Provision: Give Us This Day
5. Daily **Cleansing** of My Relationships: Forgive Us As We Forgive
6. Daily **Protection** of My Mind: Deliver Us From Evil
7. Daily **Seeking** to God's Glory: Thine Is The Glory

THIS PRAYER DESCRIBES CHRIST'S EARTHLY LIFE

Each of these elements in the Lord's Prayer are what we see characterized in Christ's life. If we read closely through the Gospels we can see that:

Jesus sought to point people to worship God the Father.

Jesus consecrated His body to God the Father at His baptism.

Jesus sought for His Father's will not His own.

Jesus confessed He needed every Word of God as His daily food.

Jesus was forgiving of those who spitefully abused Him on the Cross.

Jesus resisted the Devil and his temptations.

Jesus sought that God the Father be magnified.

SIMPLE TRUTHS, DAILY RENEWED IN MY LIFE

Hearing, understanding, and believing truth can change the course of a person's life.

Jesus spoke these chapters of Matthew to a group of people living in a militarily occupied land, going through daily life with financial oppression, mostly scraping along through their lives with subsistent wages, and with no change in the foreseeable future.

Jesus spoke to people that lived out every day: the recipe for despair and depression.

That is what spiritual warfare is all about: Satan was us to be hopeless, despairing, living

only for pleasure, distracted and out of touch with God's Word.

What do you share with people locked into what appears to be an endless spiral of repetitive work, endless financial pressures, and no changes possible? That was who made up:

4. THE AUDIENCE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

That was the audience that heard Jesus teach.

That was the world of the New Testament, living in Israel in the First Century.

Here is the world of today as portrayed by the NYT:

Stressed, Tired, Rushed: A Portrait of the Modern Family

Life is hard.

The oldest known book in the world was written either by Job (4,200 years ago while the Ice Ages were still unfolding after Noah's Flood); or by Moses (3,500 years ago while the children of Israel were still in captivity in Egypt).

Either way, the message from the oldest book in the world, part of the only Book that God Himself wrote through inspiration is painful.

Here is the earliest summary of life on Earth for humans:

“For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7, NASB)

LIFE IS NOT EASY

Those oldest words from God through Job are painful.

In a world governed by laws of physics, we know that the heat of a campfire will always carry aloft those glowing sparks into the darkness of the evening sky.

In that same world governed by the spiritual laws of sin and mankind's fall away from their Creator, life is hard.

We are all born for trouble. Life is hard whether you are an impoverished refugee fleeing war torn Syria, or a nationally known, mega-rich athlete or entertainer. Life is hard.

So to the stressed, tired and rushed of the first century and to us today Jesus left a simple message to keep His servants marching in step with His plan.

All versions capture the clear, simple, direct command of Jesus Christ. “Pray Like This” saying that each time we pray, we each remind ourselves of these elements in our life. We could call the Lord's Prayer:

5. THE MESSAGE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER: WHAT WE NEED TO LIVE

“Our Father...” means I need You to Focus Me:

Because we are so weak, fearful, and distracted, we need to pause each day and reorient my life to Who God really is.

We need God to focus our hearts upon His Majesty.

Lord, I want to Worship You, so focus me upon how great You are today.

“Your Kingdom...” means I need God to Control Me:

Because we are so easily wanting our own way.

Like Isaiah 53:6 says, we each turn to our own way by habit.

That’s just how we are wired.

So we need to pause each day to surrender our body back to God’s control, and then reaffirm our trust in His plans.

Lord, I want You to Control me, so I surrender to your control today.

“Your will...” means I need God to Lead Me:

Because we are so easily misled and confused, and needy of help to find our way in life, and we are so unable to know the future that we really need daily guidance.

Lord, I want You to Guide me, so I will seek to follow You today.

“Daily bread...” means I need God to Supply Me:

Because we are so temporary, frail, insufficient and unable to even go without sleep for very long.

I need to pause each day to ask God to give me what I need to not just survive today, but be filled and satisfied.

Lord, I feed me daily bread by Your Word, to supply me so I see Your Hand in my life.

“Forgive us...” means I need God to Cleanse Me:

Because we are so prone to bumps, scrapes, and wounds that easily get infected with bitterness.

So I need to pause and seek the cleansing forgiveness You give for all my sins against You.

Lord, I want to experience the healing that comes through releasing all my hurts and injuries to Your care, and receiving the joy of being completely forgiven and forgiving.

“Deliver us...” means I need God to Protect Me:

Because we are so vulnerable. The spirit-world around us is so filled with enemies and dangers that I need to pause each day and arm myself for survival and victory each day, as I invite You to Deliver me.

Lord, protect me by clothing me with Your armor, I want to put on Christ and allow you to protect me.

“Yours is...” means I need God to Empty Me:

Because we are so prone to pride, self-sufficiency, and self-focus that we need to pause and ask to be emptied of cultivating a self-driven life.

Lord, empty me of pride, and overflow me with Your presence as I clothe my self with humility.

Now, here is the key. How would we start doing this more regularly.

How can we unleash the power God offers into our lives today?

Here is one way. Start with that first petition.

BECAUSE WE ARE WEAK & FEARFUL: I NEED TO FOCUS BACK ON GOD

Because we are so weak and often fearful Jesus said we need to focus upon Who our God really is.

This is the area of worship, where we focus upon the person, nature, and attributes of God Almighty.

The first petition of the Lord's Prayer is all that.

It is a cry to Focus my life on Who You are as my God.

It is a call to worship God, and allow Him to dispel our fears with His Omnipresence.

It is an invitation to allow Him to overwhelm our weaknesses with Him Omnipotence.

Each time we say that first petition, we are to surround these words with a longing for God Almighty, to Whom we are speaking to dispel our fears with His Presence, and overwhelm all our weaknesses with His strength.

Ready to practice that? Speak the first petition to Him:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name...

Our Father: we are so weak, fearful, and distracted, we need to pause each day and reorient my life to Who God really is.

Lord, I want to Worship You, so focus me upon how great You are today.

Next time you feel fearfully alone and helplessly weak, us that as a moment to flee back to the powerful position of repeating who you are by talking to your Father.

Where is He? *Your Father is in Heaven.*

What does He want us to do? *Hallow, reverence, worship, and focus upon His Great Name.*

How would we apply that truth so it isn't just a fact that we know at a distance, but never experience?

One way to do this at times is to hallow God's Name using the words of an old and familiar hymn. Here is a great hymn about the Great name of our Great God:

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS (#43)

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

4. THE TRUTHS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

We have seen the 1). Setting of the Lord's Prayer (spiritual warfare); the 2). Target of the Lord's Prayer (God our father); the 3). Content of the Lord's Prayer; the 4). Audience of the Lord's Prayer; the 5). Message of the Lord's Prayer; and now the 6). Lessons of the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus now says that each time we think about God, turn our attention His way, and communicate with Him, we should follow these simple guidelines.

Truth one, everything starts and ends with our Father.

He is loving, seeing, caring, and all-powerful as "Our Father" in heaven.
See how this prayer pattern starts and ends with God?

Truth two, everything about our lives as His children is under our Father's control.

He hinges all His blessings upon us following God "Your Kingdom come" and doing His will, "Your will be done".

See how the kingdom rule, and daily leading are prominently right at the start?

Truth three, all of our needs, provisions, and daily upkeep are overseen by our Father.

He wants to "Give us this day" what we need to go.

But all needs are to be brought in the context of our relationship to Him, and submission to His will.

See that right there in the very center of the prayer?

Truth four, we need our Father's protection.

The final three elements of the Lord's Prayer are repeated through the rest of the New Testament: **keeping clean** "forgiving and forgiven", **keeping alert** for Him to "deliver us", and **keeping humble** by the choice that "Yours is the glory".