

Text: Matthew 5:9-13

Theme: The Power of the Prayer

September 30, 2018

Suppose you ordered a new computer online and Fed-Ex delivered it to your door. How valuable would your shiny, new computer be if you never opened the box? If it never left the box, would its value increase or decrease with age? The only way to get the benefits from a new computer is to use it. The Lord's Prayer, probably the most repeated prayer in the world, is useless if merely repeated, but the most powerful words on earth when we claim the benefits of the power of the Prayer.

I. The Lord's Prayer, as common as it may be, is a prayer overflowing with power. A. To receive the power of that prayer, we start with the preparation. 1. Our preparation begins with proper posture of the heart. Why do we tell our kids to sit up straight? Because posture affects the entire body, right? As we pray the Lord's Prayer, the posture of our heart has a direct effect on the power of the Prayer. Proper prayer posture is setting aside the notion that we have all the answers. It's humbling ourselves by acknowledging, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling." When our posture is proper, we receive power from His Prayer.

2. Our preparation continues with proper position of the soul. How many of you sleep standing on your head? By design, the body functions best in proper positions. As we prepare to pray, we put our soul in its proper position. We set aside any ideas that we are pretty good on our own, that we only need a little help from God, that we only need Him when we're desperate. After we set aside all our foolish ideas, we get to the soul of the matter as we acknowledge our true condition, and we say, "Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me." When we acknowledge that we are desperate sinners, we are ready to bask in the power of the Prayer.

B. With proper posture and position, we ask, "How do I receive the power of the Prayer?" 1. We receive power by realizing we are speaking to the Creator of the universe. How many of you would ask a five-year old how to get to New York or even to Minneapolis? In the Lord's Prayer, we are talking to our loving, caring, understanding, thoughtful Father, the Father who loves us more than we can ever understand. As our Father, He's also omnipotent, all-powerful, omniscient, all-knowing, and the God who is everywhere. This God has invited us into His presence and when we're in the presence of God, we're in the presence of unlimited power.

2. We receive power from the Prayer by seeking His Will. Imagine you were the quarterback for the Packers and had led your team to the Super Bowl. How many of you would walk away at that moment and call it a season? The power of prayer is found in our willingness to surrender our goals, our dreams, our hopes, our moments of glory, our greatest joys and our greatest sorrows to our God as an act of waving the white flag, of saying, "I give You everything, Lord, because You have given me everything. Take my life and let it be as You desire it to be!" As we say, "Not my will, but Your will be done," we experience prayer's power.

3. We receive power by claiming absolute dependency. How many of you like to be dependent on someone else, even for simple things? We love our independence and when someone takes it away, it breaks our heart. As much as we like our independence, prayer compels us to set aside our independence for the sake of

receiving power from our God. As we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we're saying, "Here's my life, Lord. You take control. Give me what I need this day, not what I think is best, but what You know is best. I admit that I need You, that I'm dependent on You." As we depend on God, we see God working in miraculous ways.

4. We receive power by clinging to His forgiveness. "Forgive us our trespasses." What does a child who is absolutely terrified of water do when you are about to set them into the swimming pool? Do they say, "Mom, I'd rather not go into the water right now?" or do they leave imprints in your arms as they hold on for dear life? As we ask God to forgive, we're in desperation mode. Guilt is eating away at us like a leprosy of the heart. We want relief; we need relief. And as we pray desperately clinging to our God and His promise of forgiveness, He gently yet powerfully says to us, "Consider it done. Forgiven now. Forgiven forever!"

5. We receive power by forgiving others as He forgives us. Suppose you had leprosy, a very contagious disease common in the New Testament and that you exposed your entire family and they all contracted that dreaded disease. If someone came along with a cure, how many of you would go on your merry way and leave your family in their pain? Forgiveness is our relief from spiritual leprosy and as God cleanses us, He empowers us to cleanse others, to relieve their spiritual leprosy by forgiving as He has forgiven us. Forgiveness has power to be sure, but forgiveness which is followed by forgiving others, that's a double dose of prayer's power.

6. We receive power by expecting God to protect us. "But deliver us from evil." How many of you expect your brakes to work as you approach a stoplight in Medford? How many of you expect the brakes of the vehicle behind you to work at that same stoplight? As we pray, we expect. We expect God to listen and we expect God to protect. Those expectations don't invite stupidity on our part. Instead, they surround us with comfort, with security, with the assurance that God has it all under control. We can worry about what might happen, but as we pray expecting God to protect, convinced God will protect, His prayer proves that He is all-powerful.

7. We receive the power of the Prayer by acknowledging that it's all about God. "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." Any mention of us, of our power, of us mustering up some power? The power of the Prayer becomes ours as we admit with great excitement that this isn't about us. It's all about Him! The power, the glory, the honor, the praise, the thanks, the adoration. They all belong to God and as we give God what God surely deserves, God's loving response is to hear our prayer, to answer as He knows best, to be the God He is and always has been, the God who gave us the gift of prayer.

8. Power setting in the box is useless power. Likewise, the Lord's Prayer spoken thoughtlessly is also useless. But, when that Prayer is spoken with focused faith, it is the most powerful prayer in the world. Amen.