



WHEN YOU PRAY

HOW THE LORD'S PRAYER CAN
EMPOWER YOUR PRAYER LIFE

STEVE STEWART

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Ending Uncertainty
2. Our Father Who Is In The Heavens
3. Hallowed Be Thy Name
4. Your Kingdom Come
5. Your Will Be Done On Earth As In The Heavens
6. Give Us Today Our Daily Bread
7. Forgive Us Our Debts As We Also Have Forgiven
8. Do Not Bring Us Into Temptation
9. A Powerful Force



WHEN YOU PRAY

1 ENDING
UNCERTAINTY

ENDING THE UNCERTAINTY

Often during this journey, I am asked, “How do I pray?” This is not an easy question to answer. Prayer involves so many facets: meditation, praying the scriptures, intercession, petition, thanksgiving, contemplation and so many more. Like many of you, these are all reflected in my personal prayer life.

However, over the years, the primary foundation for me has always been the Lord’s Prayer. I’m in good company; The Lord’s Prayer was central in the early church’s worship. St. Augustine and Martin Luther both said that there is nothing more wonderful in the whole Bible than the Lord’s Prayer.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray (Luke 11), He taught them what we now call The Lord’s Prayer. I believe that in this prayer He gave us a model, an outline to help us. It provides a framework, a track to run on, as we pray.

The Lord’s Prayer is not intended to simply be repeated, but to discover the depths of meaning in each phrase. When I took hold of this, my days of not knowing what to pray about were over. And though the framework is the same, the prayer never is.

So, what can we learn from the Lord's Prayer?

Jesus gave some guidelines before we ever start to pray:

When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt 6:6)

Praying in a quiet place is a guard against distraction. This touches on the core of prayer: communion with God. It is interesting that the Greek word for "room" refers to the place where valuables were kept. There are treasures waiting for us in prayer. David deeply knew this:

*When You said, 'Seek My face,'
My heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek.' (Ps. 27:8)*

Privacy in prayer is about intimacy and raw honesty with God. In the quiet place is where we meet Him. (I encourage you to find your literal "quiet place" where you build a secret history with the Triune God. Just going there begins to settle our minds and spirits to meet with Him.)


Jesus was radically changing the disciples' thinking about prayer—no longer is the Temple the special place to pray special prayers.

As we read or recite the Lord's Prayer in its entirety, we are immediately struck with the fact that something is missing: nowhere in this prayer are the words "I", "me", or "myself". Instead, throughout the prayer are the words, "You/Your" and "Our/Us". Regularly praying through this prayer will help us to break free from the intense individualism that marks our post-modern Christianity.

No wonder the Lord's Prayer has been so central to the church through the centuries. Jesus has given us a great gift that takes us ever deeper into relationship with Him. It keeps us from getting stuck, always leading us to new expressions of our heart and understanding.

As I wrote earlier, the Lord's Prayer has provided a framework that is so multi-faceted that, day by day and year by year, I have never prayed exactly the same twice, and I have never run dry of what to pray. It is a prayer that reveals and releases His amazing grace.

Next, let's begin our look at the prayer itself...



WHEN YOU
PRAY

2 OUR FATHER
WHO IS IN THE HEAVENS

OUR FATHER

From its first words, the Lord's Prayer invites me into relationship with God. This invitation is the single greatest gift in this model prayer from Jesus. His Father is now mine and ours.

When Jesus gave us the name, "Father", He gave us our true identity: sons and daughters. He is not like a Father; He is a Father. From the beginning, this Prayer is built upon the truth of belonging. Belonging is the joy of the Gospel.

By praying, Our Father, I am praying on behalf of all my brothers and sisters—both known and unknown—and for all those who have not yet discovered the truth of who He is. So the Lord's Prayer is a big prayer.

This prayer brings nobility to all, for it declares before God and all His heavenly hosts the true identity and value of every man, woman and child by inviting everyone to call God their Father. The church father, Chrysostom has noted that in its radical inclusiveness, the Lord's Prayer removes from our hearts hatred, pride and envy, for it brings good things to all.

WHO IS IN THE HEAVENS

God is our close and loving Father, but He is also the sovereign all-powerful Creator. Our Father is the Lord and King over all of the cosmos. He is both immanent and transcendent, and this first line of the Lord's Prayer calls me to meditate on both truths.

Literally, Jesus said, "the heavens" which speaks of the ultimate reality that is all around us. Not so much a place that is "out there", but the greater truth that the heavens, the place of His activity, surrounds us, sometimes breaking in when we least expect it.

Often, as I pray to our Father in the heavens, my eyes are lifted up to the skies. (I usually pray in a quiet place outside, behind my house.) My thoughts and my spirit are lifted up like David:

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him (Ps 8:3-4)*

On the next page, I will give you an example of how I pray this line of the Lord's Prayer...

LET'S PRAY...

Our Father


Oh Father, I belong to You. My heart and my life have been captured by Your Father's love and care for me. Your love makes me secure, speaking into my deepest places that I am Your child. At this exact moment You are surrounding and embracing me. You have drawn me into Your heart, and I have drawn You into mine. Father, I belong to You and nothing will ever change that truth. I'm my Beloved's and He is Mine.

I call out to You, our Father. We, all of us belong to You, for You are the Father of all You have created. Whether realized or not, the truth is that You, Lord of the cosmos, have called us Your children. There is no one outside of Your care, beyond Your love. We truly are Your children. With one Father, we are one family. Let a revelation of Who You are bind our hearts together.

LET'S PRAY...

who is in the heavens

That you, our Father, are the creator and inhabit every atom of the cosmos, is too wonderful for me to comprehend. You are at once, in me and with me yet equally in the farthest reaches of Your ever-expanding universe. How can You be both—and yet You are. The more I consider You as Lord of the heavens, the more I realize that You are unfathomable. You are Father and You are the Original Source of everything. And Jesus, you and the Father are One. So as I pray Our Father, I am praying to you as well. For by You, all things were created, both visible and invisible. All things. Created by You and for You.



WHEN YOU PRAY

3 HALLOWED
BE YOUR NAME

HALLOWED BY YOUR NAME

This is the first petition (request) in the Lord's Prayer. Significantly, it focuses on the Father, not on us. "Hallowed" is multi-faceted and rich in meaning and significance. At its core, it means to be holy. In this petition we are joining with the angels and elders around the throne of God (Rev. 4:8, 11) who cry out, "Holy, holy, holy". From the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, we are praying with the rhythm of heaven. And what is heaven looking upon? God's majesty and His transcendent beauty.

Lately, this phrase has led me to meditate upon His radiance. As Ps. 50:2 declares, "God appears in glorious radiance." God's essence is expressed in radiance and light throughout the Old Testament; His presence is "life-giving light" (Ps 56:13); in worship, we "walk in the light" of His presence (Ps 89:15). Three times in John's Gospel Jesus declared that He is the light of the world.

Hallowed means to be glorified. In our prayer and worship we are simply agreeing with the glory that God has revealed. His glory means, literally, His weightiness (kabod). We are asking God to make His glory more known to us, that His glory would shine in and through us.

We are declaring that the great need of the world is to experientially know His weightiness, His glory. We are asking for revelation to be released to the world so that it might think greater, truer thoughts of Who the Triune God really is, like the Roman soldier at the foot of the cross who suddenly had his spiritual eyes opened and cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The church father, Tertullian, noted that when we pray for God's name to be hallowed, we are praying for all those who do not yet know Him. In this way, our first petition is also in agreement with the heart of God that all might come to know Him (1 Ti 2:4; 2 Pe 3:9). All of the cosmos was created for His glory. When we live in the acknowledgement of His glory, we live in the rhythm of His grace. This is how all of life was created to be.

So in praying for God to reveal His glory, we are asking for His deepest blessing to be poured out upon us and the entire world. Note that we are asking God to reveal His glory, not us. Only God can reveal God.

This is why, "Hallowed be Your name" is the first petition of this, the greatest of all prayers in the scriptures. The holiness, the radiance, the glory of God is at the center of everything. As Chrysostom wrote long ago, "We ask nothing before the glory of the Father; all other things are secondary to praising Him."

LET'S PRAY...

Hallowed be Your name

Oh Father, hallowed by Your name. Holy, holy, holy is Your name, Oh my God. Let me join with what is going on around Your throne right now. Let heaven and earth declare Your majesty and beauty. Let me behold your beauty today. You are beyond all my words and understanding. Like the angels, like the twenty-four elders I declare before all of creation Your holiness, your transcendence, Your majesty. You appear in glorious radiance. You are full of light: Father, Son, Holy Spirit—you are the light of the world.

LET'S PRAY...

Hallowed be Your name

Hallowed be Your name. Glorify Your name.. The whole earth is filled with Your glory. Like Moses, my spirit cries out to You today: Show me Your glory! I long to see and to feel Your glory. Father, I am thirsty for more of You. In power, reveal Your glory to Your church. Let Your glory come down wherever Your children gather. Let Your glory mark us, let us be transformed from glory to glory as we behold You.

LET'S PRAY...

Hallowed be Your name

*And make Your name hallowed in the world. Release
revelation of who You really are. Everyone and
everything was created for Your glory and Your beauty.
Put a hunger in the heart of the world for You. May
everyone come to know You. Make Your name famous.
May all the earth join with heaven in worshiping You.
Your glory fills the cosmos. All of creation sings Your
name.*

*Glory to God in the highest.
Glory to God in the highest.
Hallowed by Your name.*



WHEN YOU
PRAY

4 YOUR
KINGDOM COME

YOUR KINGDOM COME

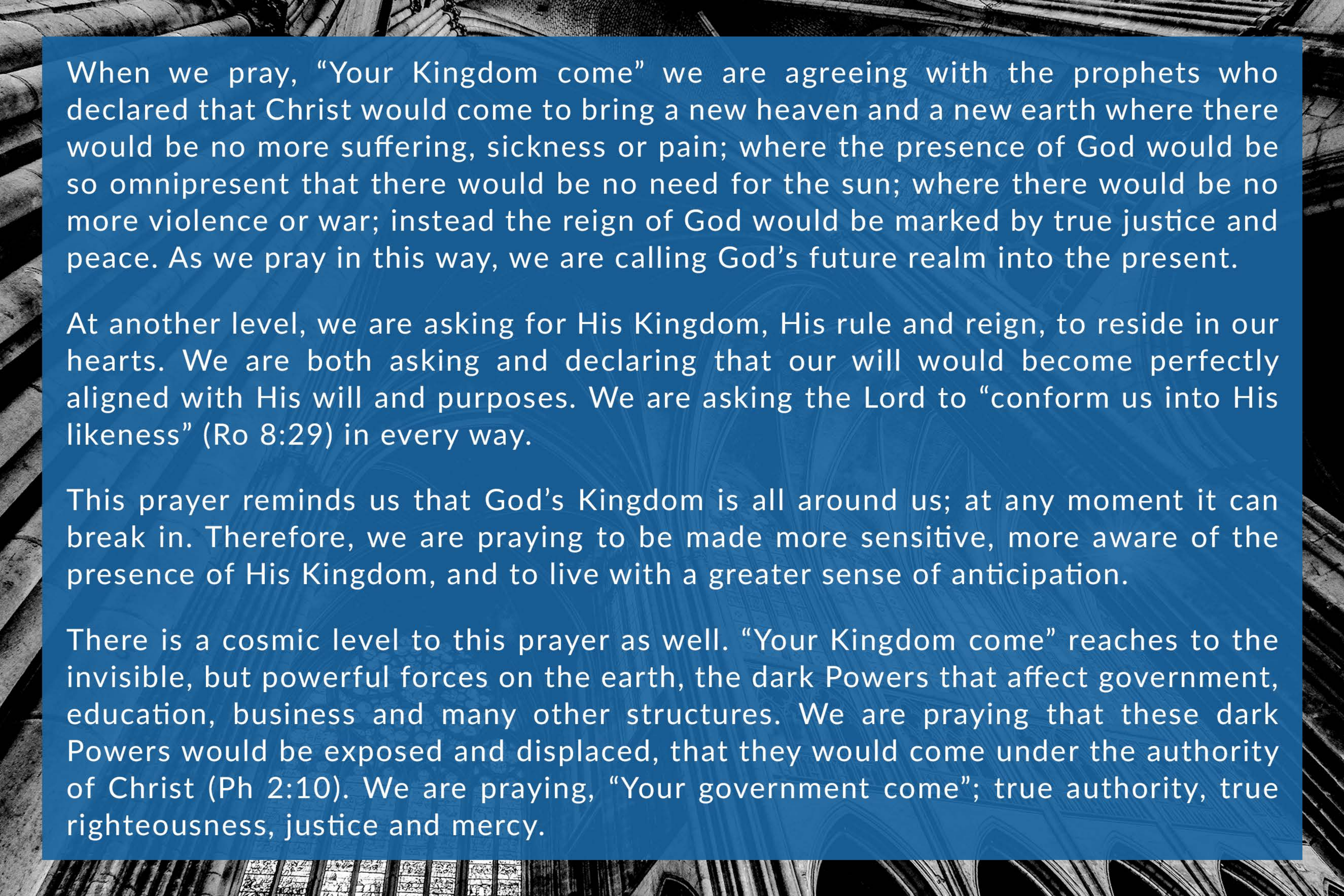
This second petition can be understood, and therefore prayed, at a number of different levels. The literal translation of this phrase is, “Come, Your Kingdom”; it is an imperative, reflecting a deep longing, even a desperation, for the purposes of God to come to pass.

As Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves.

(Ro 8:22-23)

The early church lived with an expectation that the Kingdom of God would break in at any time. The Lord's Prayer calls us to live with this acute sense of anticipation. As we pray, “Your Kingdom come”, our eyes are lifted and our hearts are once again focused upon the eternal things of heaven; we are reminded where our true treasure lies (Lu 12:34; 18:22).



When we pray, “Your Kingdom come” we are agreeing with the prophets who declared that Christ would come to bring a new heaven and a new earth where there would be no more suffering, sickness or pain; where the presence of God would be so omnipresent that there would be no need for the sun; where there would be no more violence or war; instead the reign of God would be marked by true justice and peace. As we pray in this way, we are calling God’s future realm into the present.

At another level, we are asking for His Kingdom, His rule and reign, to reside in our hearts. We are both asking and declaring that our will would become perfectly aligned with His will and purposes. We are asking the Lord to “conform us into His likeness” (Ro 8:29) in every way.

This prayer reminds us that God’s Kingdom is all around us; at any moment it can break in. Therefore, we are praying to be made more sensitive, more aware of the presence of His Kingdom, and to live with a greater sense of anticipation.

There is a cosmic level to this prayer as well. “Your Kingdom come” reaches to the invisible, but powerful forces on the earth, the dark Powers that affect government, education, business and many other structures. We are praying that these dark Powers would be exposed and displaced, that they would come under the authority of Christ (Ph 2:10). We are praying, “Your government come”; true authority, true righteousness, justice and mercy.

In prayer, nothing is lost; nothing is wasted. Our prayers really do fill the golden bowls (Rev 5:8), and there comes a day when the longings and declarations of our hearts are poured out, releasing the eternal purposes of God.

Three small words: “Your Kingdom come” call upon the reality and power of heaven to come down; they open our hearts for God to work in each of us, and they do battle against the Powers that be, thus affecting the world and the cosmos.

Prayer is not simply a Christian activity, something we do because, as believers, we are expected to pray. No, this second petition calls us up into God’s greater story. It awakens heart, mind, and spirit to the magnificent, unstoppable and eternal purposes of God. Has there ever been a greater purpose, or a greater invitation?

Come, Your Kingdom.

The background of the entire image is a black and white photograph of a cathedral's interior, showing high vaulted ceilings and stone arches. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

LET'S PRAY...

Your Kingdom come

Father, let Your Kingdom come to me and around me. Let it come with a whole new reality, a new intensity. I want to live with a greater sense of heaven, Your eternal realm that exists outside the bounds of time. It is all that will last; it is all that really matters. Lift the eyes of my spirit, awaken in me a sensitivity to the great reality of Your Kingdom. Let me live with a new alertness to You and all You are doing. Create in me a deeper longing for You than I have ever known.

LET'S PRAY...

Your Kingdom come

Let Your Kingdom come. We long for You to come with Your righteousness, Your justice, and Your mercy. Rescue the oppressed. Bring the tangible reality of Your Kingdom to the lonely, the poor the outcast. Let justice flow like a river and Your righteousness like a never-ending stream. There will be a day when You restore all that was lost so long ago. There will be a day of perfect peace, of no more sickness or sorrow. Let that day come soon, Lord. Let Your Kingdom come in power. Let us, Your children, be Your hands and feet to bring healing and wholeness to our world. Let us receive more and more of the reality and the joy of Your Kingdom, and from that place, give away what we have received to the world around us. We join with Your church through the ages and cry out, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus".

LET'S PRAY...

Your Kingdom come

You said that there would be no end to the increase of Your government (Is 9:6). We need your true government. Let Your light expose the dark powers that influence, enflame and control what is worst in our governments, businesses, schools, and every power structure. Come, Your Kingdom! Bring Your truth and freedom. Expose and displace every evil influence. Lord, expose the evil in our hearts. Forgive and cleanse us. Let Your peace rule on the earth. Help us to cling to You. Keep us from double mindedness. Let our eyes be fixed upon You and You alone.



WHEN YOU
PRAY

5 YOUR WILL BE DONE
ON EARTH AS IN THE HEAVENS

YOUR WILL BE DONE

This is the third petition (note the period after “Your Kingdom come”). It is both a cry for the reality of heaven to come to us and an embracing of, and fellowship with, the whole world.

What is the will of God? The Lord’s Prayer is placed at the middle point of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, where He has already revealed the Father’s will: blessings upon the poor in spirit, the merciful, and those who are mourning. His will is that we be the salt and light that brings hope to the world. He desires that we live with deep respect for people; that we learn to walk in true humility and with purity of heart.

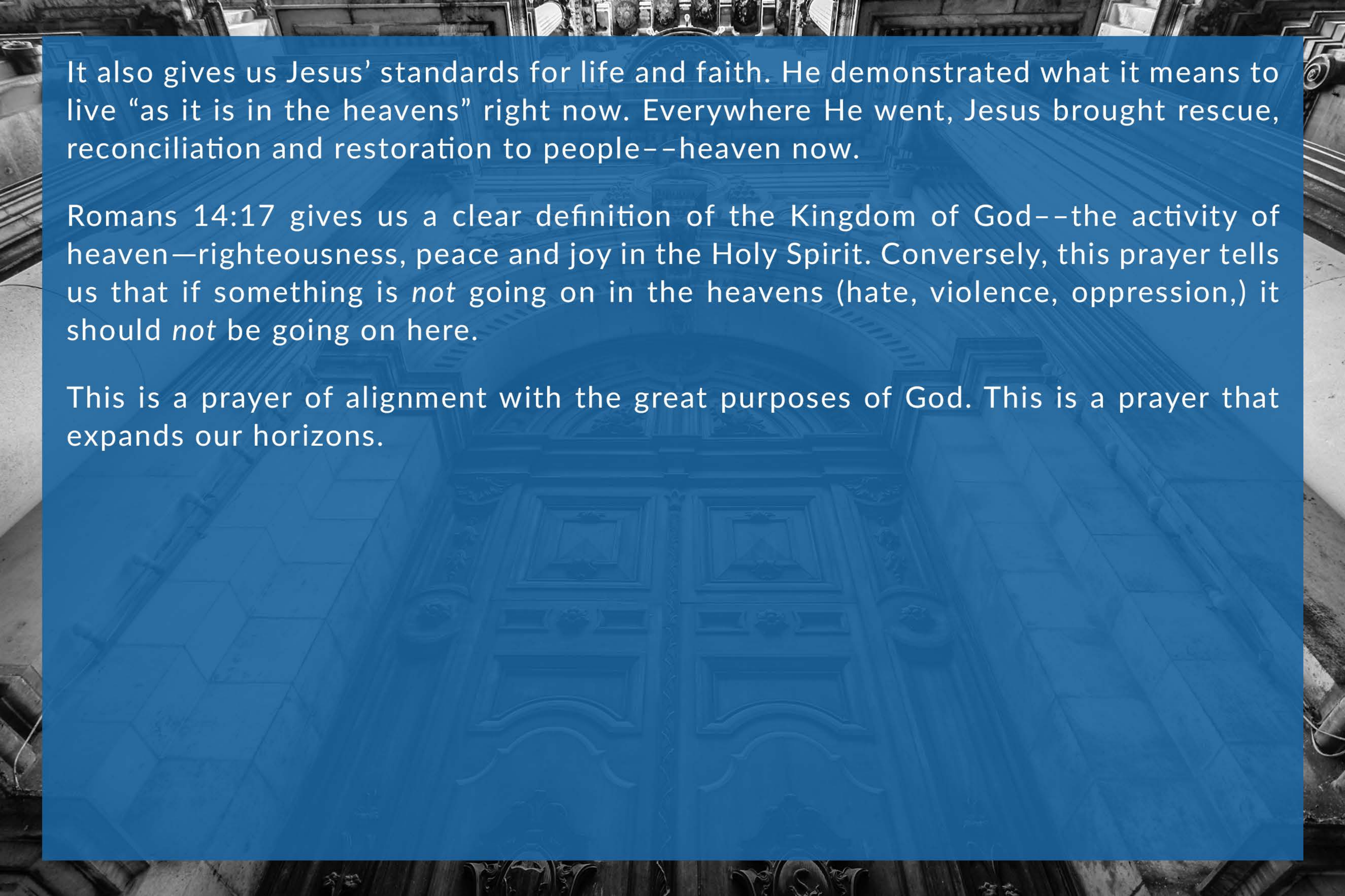
“Your will be done” is a cry for His saving will to intervene and rescue—in our lives and in the world around us. It is a longing for His will to transform us into the likeness of Jesus. This is not a passive prayer; it is a fervent cry for God to break in, for the glorious desire and plan and desire of His heart to be released upon the earth.

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN THE HEAVENS

Note that, “the heavens” is a more literal, and I believe accurate, translation. It speaks of the heavens which is the realm of the Triune God and of all the heavenly host that surround us. Though invisible, the heavens are the ultimate and eternal reality, a reality that continues to break in upon our earthy realm.

“On earth” lifts my prayers beyond my personal concerns (and there is nothing wrong with these—they please the Father, reflecting childlike faith). Earth calls me up to God’s greater purposes for the world and the cosmos (the same word in the original Greek), reminding me that I am part of His greater story. This prayer prompts me to search out His activity in the wider world, and to hold the world in my heart.

In this prayer we are reminded that life is more than what we see with our natural perception. We live in a world that constantly seeks (under the influence of the Powers) to pull us down to the material level. Our enemy wants us thinking, living and even praying strictly in the known realm. The scriptures constantly call us to lift up our eyes (Jn 4:35) and perceive with spiritual eyes (see Eph 1:3; 2:6; 6:12 etc.). This third petition reminds me of the greater reality.



It also gives us Jesus' standards for life and faith. He demonstrated what it means to live "as it is in the heavens" right now. Everywhere He went, Jesus brought rescue, reconciliation and restoration to people—heaven now.

Romans 14:17 gives us a clear definition of the Kingdom of God—the activity of heaven—righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Conversely, this prayer tells us that if something is *not* going on in the heavens (hate, violence, oppression,) it should *not* be going on here.

This is a prayer of alignment with the great purposes of God. This is a prayer that expands our horizons.

LET'S PRAY...

Your will be done on earth as it is in the heavens

Oh Father, make Your will known throughout the earth. Reveal and release Your desire and purpose for Your creation. Let us live in the righteousness, peace and joy of Your perfect will. You are a good Father.

Today, I declare Your goodness. I celebrate Your goodness upon the earth. Increase my faith. Help me to lift up my eyes and see how great, how beautiful is Your work here on the earth. Increase my heart to truly care and carry what You care about—the rescue, reconciliation and restoration of all that You have created. And please Lord, intervene in all that is not reflected in heaven. We repent for the violence, injustice and oppression on the earth. Cleanse our hearts; change our motives; reveal Your will, Your compassion; Your holiness.

LET'S PRAY...

Your will be done on earth as it is in the heavens

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit capture my heart
anew today. Give me a deep desire to follow
You, to seek out Your desires, to long to be more
like you. Teach me to bring heaven now to the
world around me. Fill me afresh today so that I
can give what I receive to others. Let me fall in
love with You all over again today. More of You.
Yes, More of You.*

A black and white photograph of the interior of St. Peter's Basilica, looking up at the ornate ceiling and columns. Latin inscriptions are visible on the walls, including "E L I S E G O R O G A V I P R O T I O P I T R E", "V T N O N D E F I C I A T F I D E S T V A", and "E T T V".

WHEN YOU
PRAY

6 GIVE US TODAY
OUR DAILY BREAD

GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD

In the second half of the Lord's Prayer, "us, our and we" are as prominent as "You and Yours" were in the first half. This reflects the two-fold command of Jesus in Mt 22:37-40 to love God and love people.

The shift to "us" is a reminder to be inclusive in our prayers. When the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, He give equal time to both human matters and heavenly ones. This second section teaches that it is not selfish or "unspiritual" to pray about social and economic needs as well as personal ones.

For too many years I ignored the "us" and made this about my personal needs; in fact, too often I prayed about my "wants" more than my needs. In this, I was reflecting the strong individualism of modern and post-modern Christianity that is so prevalent in the western church. But this fourth petition is so much bigger, more powerful, and more in line with God's greater story for mankind. This prayer connects me with the men, women and children of the developing world.

First of all, this is a prayer for bread. Jesus puts literal food before spiritual food. If Jesus cared about 5,000 hungry people enough to feed them, wouldn't He want us to pray for the feeding of billions of hungry people? This prayer reminds me that I live in a time when 50% of the world's population live on less than \$2 a day. This prayer awakens my conscience; it help propel me forward to take action as a response to my own prayer.

This is a prayer that lifts me from the sphere of my own preferences to the basic necessities of life that so many are lacking. Martin Luther said that when we pray for bread, we are praying for everything necessary for life. To acquire bread, money is needed; to acquire money, employment is needed. In turn, this requires good government, good business and good labor.

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This petition reminds us daily of inequality and injustice, bringing to mind the words of Jesus:

And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? (Lu 18:7)

We are reminded to pray for guidance, wisdom and strategies on behalf of the poor, and to intercede on behalf of all those who feed and care for the needy of the world. It has been said that “we live in the time of the fourth petition.” This is a prayer for social justice. And the Lord loves justice. (Ps 11:7)

Like the previous petition, this prayer calls us up to a wider, greater perspective. This is a prayer that enlarges our spirits and our minds, and quickens our conscience to agree with the compassionate purposes of the Lord.

LET'S PRAY...

Give us today our daily bread

Before I pray for my own needs, stir in me today Your heart of compassion for the hungry and needy of the world. Though I can hardly conceive of the billions of people who are without food today, You see every one of them, every hungry child; You see every hurting mother, desperate to find a way to feed her babies. You see every parent wrestling with guilt, fear and anger over the never-ending poverty that has gripped them for so long. Please Lord, let me feel what You feel.

LET'S PRAY...

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us, Your church, where we have turned a blind eye, where we have walked by the hurting on the side of the road. Forgive us for not doing everything we can for Your precious poor and hungry ones. In a world with millions of slaves, set the captives free. We confess that we are complicit in this through our reckless consumerism. Release powerful, effective and creative strategies to bring true hope and change to the poor of the world. Raise up righteous and compassionate government, and strong, fair business practices. Touch the very fabric of our society.

LET'S PRAY...

Give us today our daily bread

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, remind me today of my true situation: that I am wholly dependent upon Your mercy and goodness toward me. Let me live with gratefulness today. It is only by Your grace that today I don't have to wonder where my next meal will come from or where I will sleep tonight. Never let me take these wonderful mercies for granted.

Thank You for your lovingkindness to me.

A black and white photograph of the interior of a large Gothic cathedral. The image shows the high, vaulted ceiling with intricate ribbing, the pointed arches of the windows and doorways, and the massive columns supporting the structure. In the center, a large, ornate cross is suspended from the ceiling, positioned in front of a large, multi-paned stained glass window. The altar area is visible in the background, featuring a detailed Gothic design. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and solemnity.

WHEN YOU PRAY

7 FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS
AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

This, the fifth petition, leads us to the all-inclusiveness of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Previously, Jesus taught us to pray for the physical things that are needed to survive; now He addresses the need for forgiveness so that we can live the abundant and free life He intended. Starving people need the Gospel to be preached to them, but first they need food. Once we have the means of physical survival, forgiveness is our greatest need, for as Pilgrim discovered, forgiveness frees us from our great burden of guilt.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, the rabbis taught that sin was a debt, like a demerit, in our account with God that separated us from Him. "Debt" is translated as sin, trespass or failure in various versions. Jesus was teaching His listeners to approach the Father and ask Him to remove the debt, to simply overlook or "forgive" it. For first century Jewish listeners, this was a whole new way of understanding their relationship with God.

This petition encourages us to keep very short accounts with the Lord and to experience His cleansing and freedom. This prayer is a daily celebration of His grace, that keeps us close to Him and our hearts tender. May we cry out like David:

Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation. (Ps 51:12)

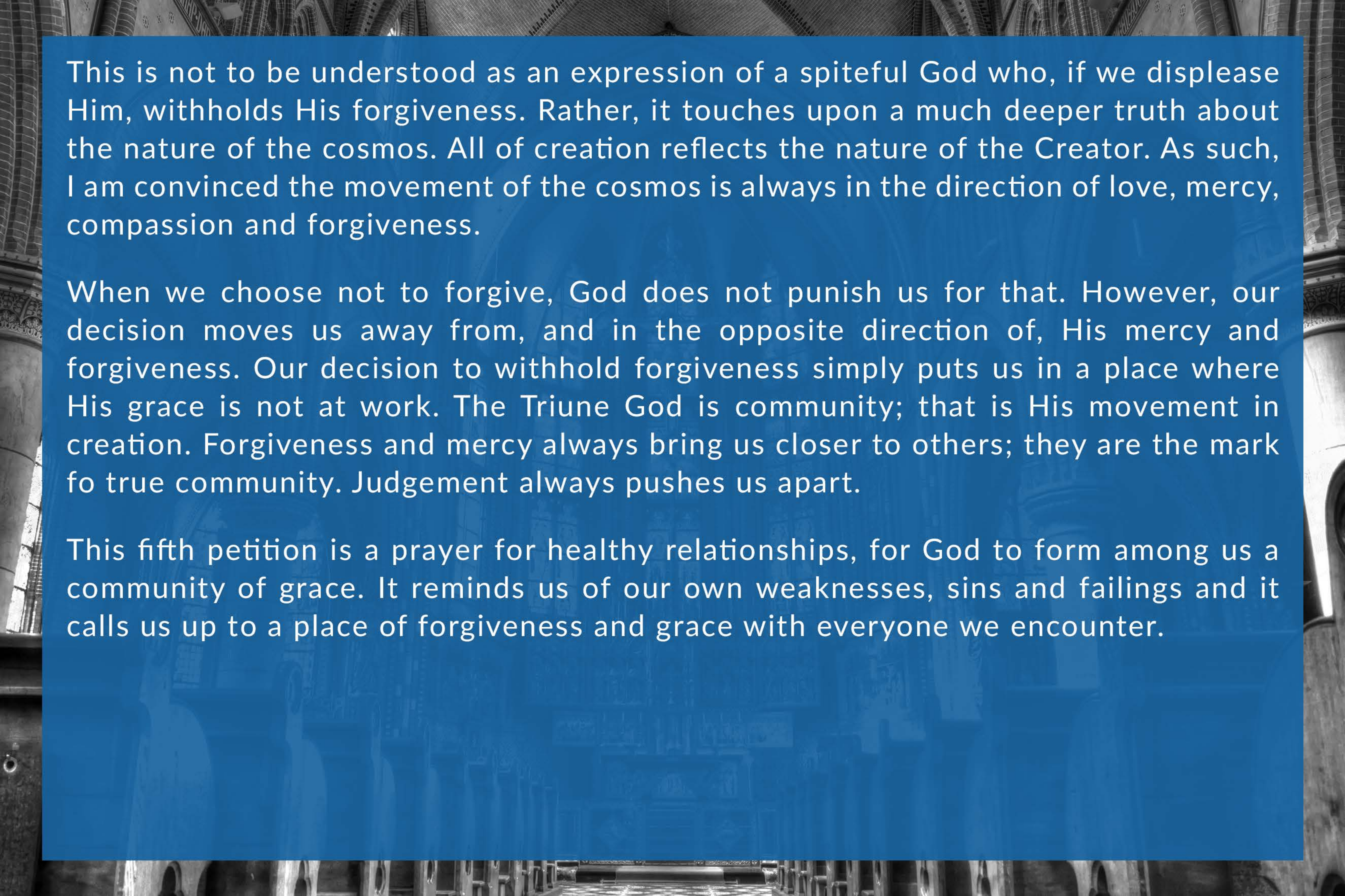
Again, we are confronted with the implications of this being a prayer on behalf of “us”. Increasingly, this has led me into a new place of identificational repentance. Like Daniel in Babylon (see ch. 9), I find myself identifying with the “debts” of the world and the church, aware that I am not above those sins in my own life.

AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS

Jesus reminds us of our privilege of access to the Father before He reminds us of our responsibility to forgive others. “Freely you have received, freely give.” (Mt 10:8) It is in our experience of receiving the Father’s forgiveness that we, at a heart level, find grace and joy to forgive others who have failed us. When we find ourselves able to forgive others, it is evidence that God’s forgiveness is truly at work in us, that we really are being changed by His Spirit into the likeness of the Son. This discovery should be a great encouragement to us.

Immediately following the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus takes us back to the issue of forgiveness:

For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don’t forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing. (Mt 6:14-15)



This is not to be understood as an expression of a spiteful God who, if we displease Him, withholds His forgiveness. Rather, it touches upon a much deeper truth about the nature of the cosmos. All of creation reflects the nature of the Creator. As such, I am convinced the movement of the cosmos is always in the direction of love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

When we choose not to forgive, God does not punish us for that. However, our decision moves us away from, and in the opposite direction of, His mercy and forgiveness. Our decision to withhold forgiveness simply puts us in a place where His grace is not at work. The Triune God is community; that is His movement in creation. Forgiveness and mercy always bring us closer to others; they are the mark for true community. Judgement always pushes us apart.

This fifth petition is a prayer for healthy relationships, for God to form among us a community of grace. It reminds us of our own weaknesses, sins and failings and it calls us up to a place of forgiveness and grace with everyone we encounter.

LET'S PRAY...

forgive us our debts

Father, I am here before You, acutely aware of my own sin and failure. In Your endless mercy, wash me clean today. Make everything new today. Lift my sin, my debt from me. Thank You that as soon as I turn to You, I am greeted by Your total forgiveness and with Your loving embrace. This is the great and ultimate truth. You are love, and You love me. Thank You for the gift of forgiveness. Thank You for the freedom and joy that awaits me whenever I turn to You in repentance. Jesus, only because of You, I am free indeed.

LET'S PRAY...

as we also have forgiven our debtors

Today, let me live in the truth of Your complete forgiveness, and let that be what I give away to others. I ask You to give me Your gift of grace to not only forgive, but to do so with great joy and a desire to truly bless any who sin against me today. Walking in the experience and deep knowledge of Your forgiveness today will protect me from offence or hurt. I desire to follow Your footsteps of healing, mercy and grace today, to move in the direction of Your eternal Kingdom.

All is grace.

All is grace.



WHEN YOU
PRAY

8 DO NOT BRING US
8 INTO TEMPTATION

AND DO NOT BRING US INTO TEMPTATION

Our most natural starting point in prayer is often, “Lord, I need to you guide and protect me”, but in the Lord’s Prayer Jesus puts this last. His priorities seem to be different than ours. First, He addresses a right understanding of who He is and a right relationship with Him; then, a desire to see His Kingdom come in our hearts and in the world, and a longing that He will return soon; a deep concern for the world’s needs, especially the poor and hungry; to deal with our past and present guilt; and then to live in mutual forgiveness with others. Only then, does Jesus address our need for protection and guidance. Examined closely, the Lord’s Prayer teaches us right priorities.

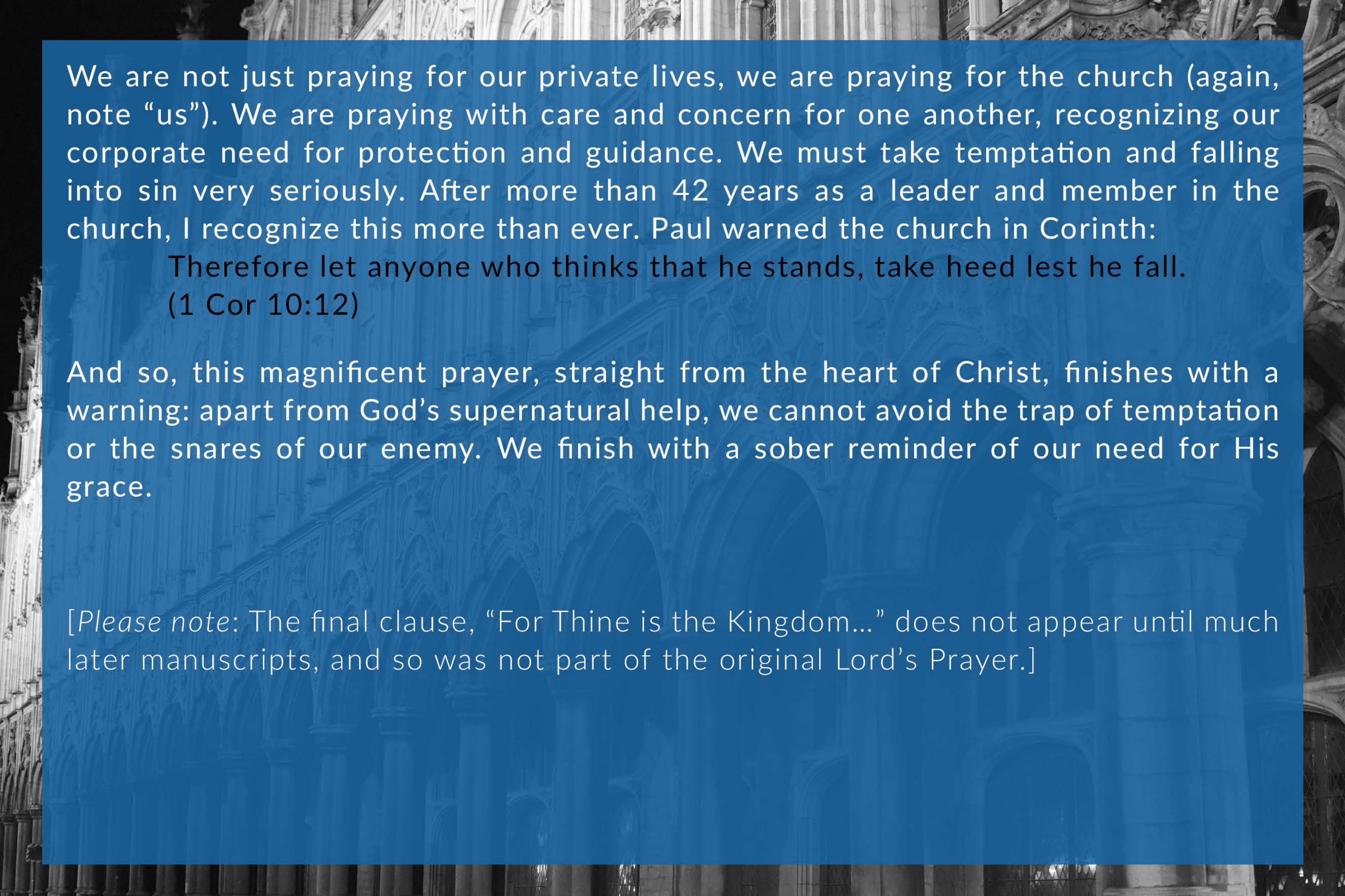
The final petition can be translated, “Do not let us be led”. To be led into something is to come under its influence. Paul wrote that we are in the world but not of it. We will walk through places and times of temptation, but pray that we or the church will never come under the power of them. As James clearly teaches, the Lord can never tempt us, so what does this prayer mean? When we pray, “Do not let us be led”, we are saying to the Lord, “Don’t let us go to the place of temptation.” We are asking Him to protect us from the power of temptation and to lead us away in another direction.

Over the years, I have prayed this as, “Father, keep me, protect me from the place of temptation.” It is interesting that Paul never told the church to resist temptation—he said to flee! For all these years, the Lord has been so faithful to answer my prayer. Again, His grace is powerfully released in our lives through this petition.

BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE

The word for deliver is very strong in the original Greek: it means to “snatch away”. We have a very real enemy who is constantly trying to draw us away from the path set before us by the Triune God. Only the Lord's more powerful “snatching” or rescuing can free us from destruction. When we are honest in our failures and sin (the fifth petition), it leads us to a very honest place regarding our weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

The majority of translations recognize that evil is supernatural and personal evil, hence “the evil one”. Jesus takes the evil one very seriously; this is obvious by how the Lord's Prayer ends. If temptation is a pit into which we fall, then the evil one is the power whose influence draws us into that pit.

The background of the slide is a photograph of the interior of a Gothic cathedral, showing high vaulted ceilings and stone columns. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

We are not just praying for our private lives, we are praying for the church (again, note “us”). We are praying with care and concern for one another, recognizing our corporate need for protection and guidance. We must take temptation and falling into sin very seriously. After more than 42 years as a leader and member in the church, I recognize this more than ever. Paul warned the church in Corinth:

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall.
(1 Cor 10:12)

And so, this magnificent prayer, straight from the heart of Christ, finishes with a warning: apart from God’s supernatural help, we cannot avoid the trap of temptation or the snares of our enemy. We finish with a sober reminder of our need for His grace.

[Please note: The final clause, “For Thine is the Kingdom...” does not appear until much later manuscripts, and so was not part of the original Lord’s Prayer.]

The background of the slide is a photograph of the interior of a large, ornate cathedral, likely St. Peter's Basilica, showing rows of columns and arches. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

LET'S PRAY...

Do not bring us into temptation


Father, You know how much I need Your protection. My flesh so easily turns toward temptation. Keep me away from the places that tempt me. In Your mercy and great power, set a hedge of fire around me. Give me discernment in the moment, so that I recognize temptation and spiritual attack. Always lead me to a place of escape. Quicken my mind and my conscience. Father, I do not pray for myself alone, but for all Your children. I pray for my friends and family. I pray for my church. We need Your great grace to keep us from corporate sin, to protect us from all kinds of temptations: pride, control, self-protection—all those things that so easily snare us.

LET'S PRAY...

but deliver us from the evil one

And Lord, snatch me out of the grasp of the evil one who comes to steal, kill and destroy. I pray this for all of my family, my children and grandchildren. Deliver us all from our very real enemy, who sometimes comes to us like a roaring lion seeking to terrify and devour, and other times with the cunning of a serpent. Only You can protect us. We confess our great need of You. We declare that we live under the protection of the Most High. We belong to you. I am Yours and You are mine. Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.

Nothing can separate me from You. Nothing.



WHEN YOU
PRAY

9 A POWERFUL
FORCE

CONCLUSION

The Lord's Prayer encompasses everything important for life. It reveals Jesus' priorities in prayer; these are prayers according to the will of the Father, therefore we can pray with confidence that they will surely be heard.

There is immense spiritual power in this prayer, much of it yet to be tapped. Through this prayer we can be co-laborers, even co-creators with God, "calling into being those things which are not" (Ro 4:17). We can affect history. Through this prayer we can contribute to the feeding of billions of desperately hungry people. We are empowered to ask for the forgiveness of sins—not just for us, but for many. We can pray and affect the quality of our life together as the church. Through this prayer we can facilitate the rescue of ourselves and the church from the dangers of the evil one.

These are great privileges that we must take seriously. Such prayer is not a religious activity; it is a powerful force, releasing the purposes of God into His creation. However we engage in the Lord's Prayer, whether as a focus of meditation or an outline to guide our prayer life, we are invited by the Lord to participate with Him, confident that He hears us and joins us in our engagement in this remarkable prayer which has been given to us as a great gift from Him.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books by Steve Stewart:

When Everything Changes

The Journey: 35 Stories of Kingdom Encounters

The First Church Restored

For weekly teaching from Steve, subscribe to:

The Impact Nations Podcast

To learn more about Steve and his ministry, visit:

www.impactnations.com