

## **The Disciple's Prayer ~ Part 4**

### **Sitting at the Feet of Yeshua**

We have been studying the Disciple's Prayer found in Matthew 6. We learned that the first three petitions have to do with God and His Glory. We learned that when we pray, we are to worship Father God for who He is and exalt His name. We learned to pray for His will to saturate our life, our family, our congregation, our community, our region, our state, our nation, and the world.

The second part of the prayer, which deals with our needs and our necessities, is a marvelous unity. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, the past, and the future before the footstool of the grace of God.

Not only is this a prayer, which brings the whole of life to the presence of God; it is also a prayer, which brings the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for forgiveness, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Son, Yeshua our Savior and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future times of testing, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Ruach HaKodesh, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.

***"Give us the food we need today"*** ~ Matthew 6:11

The first petition Yeshua made was for our physical needs. He asked for bread for one day at a time. God wants us to trust Him to supply what we need each day, rather than relying on what we have set aside.

Given Israel's wilderness history with the manna, you would think that this is the one petition of the Disciple's Prayer about which the meaning would not be in doubt. It seems on the face of it to be the simplest and the most direct of them all. However, many interpreters have offered several explanations of it. Let's look at some of the other explanations that have been offered.

- The bread has been identified with the bread of the Lord's Supper. From the very beginning, the Disciple's Prayer has been closely connected with the Lord's Table. In the early Messianic liturgies, it is suggested that the Disciple's Prayer should be prayed at the Lord's Table, and some have taken this petition as a prayer to be granted the daily privilege of sitting at the Table of our Lord, and of eating the spiritual food which a man receives there.
- The bread has been identified with the spiritual food of the Word of God. So, this petition has been taken to be a prayer for **the** true teaching, **the** true doctrine, and **the** essential truth, which is in the Scriptures, and which is indeed food for a man's mind, heart and soul.
- The bread has been taken to stand for Yeshua himself. Yeshua called himself the bread of life (see John 6:33-35), and this has been taken to be a prayer that daily we may feed on Him who is the living bread. So then, this petition has been taken as a prayer that we might be cheered and strengthened with Yeshua the living bread.
- This petition has also been taken in a purely Jewish sense. The bread has been taken to be the bread of the heavenly kingdom. Luke tells how one of the bystanders said to Yeshua: ***"Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God"*** (Luke 14:15). The Jews believed that when the Messiah came there would be a great Messianic banquet, at which the chosen ones of God would sit down. It would be a kind of reception feast given by God for His own people. So, then, this has been taken to be a petition for a place at the final Messianic banquet of the people of God.

Although we need not agree that any one of these explanations is the main meaning of this petition, we need not reject any of them as false. They all have their own truth and their own relevance. The difficulty of

interpreting this petition was increased by the fact that there was very considerable doubt as to the meaning of the Greek word translated "daily" by many translations.

The extraordinary fact was that, until just a few years ago, there was no other known occurrence of this word in the whole of Greek literature. Therefore, it was not possible to be sure what it precisely meant. But, not very long ago, a papyrus fragment turned up with this word on it; and the papyrus fragment was actually a woman's shopping list! And against an item on it was this Greek word. It was a note to remind her to buy supplies of a certain food for the coming day. So, very simply, what this petition means is: "Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me to get the things I've got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come in from school, and the men come in from work. Grant that the table be not bare when we sit down together today." This is a simple prayer that God will supply us with the things we need for the coming day.

When we see that this is a simple petition for the needs of everyday life, certain tremendous truths emerge.

It tells us that God cares for our bodies. Yeshua showed us that; He spent so much time healing men's diseases and satisfying their physical hunger. He was anxious when He thought that the crowd who had followed Him out into the lonely places had a long road home, and no food to eat before they returned home.

This petition teaches us to pray for our bread for today. It teaches us to live one day at a time, and not to worry and be anxious about the distant and the unknown future. When Yeshua taught his disciples to pray this petition, there is little doubt that his mind was going back to the story of the manna in the wilderness (see Sh'mot 16:1-21). The children of Israel were starving in the wilderness and God sent them the manna, the food from heaven; but there was one condition - they must gather only enough for their immediate needs. If they tried to gather too much and store it up, it turned sour. They had to be satisfied with enough for that day.

This petition tells us to live one day at a time. It forbids the anxious worry, which is so characteristic of the life when we have not learned to trust God.

By implication, this petition gives God his proper place. It admits that it is from God we receive the food, which is necessary to support life. All living things come from God. Our food, therefore, is the direct gift of God.

This petition very wisely reminds us of how prayer works. If a man prayed this prayer, and then sits back and waits for bread to fall into his hands, he would certainly starve. It reminds us that prayer and work go hand in hand and that when we pray we must go on to work to make our prayers come true. It is true that the living seed comes from God, but it is equally true that it is man's task to grow and to cultivate that seed. God's bounty and man's toil must combine. Prayer, like faith, without works is dead.

This prayer also teaches us never to be selfish in our prayers. It is a prayer, which we can help God to answer by giving to others who are less fortunate than we are. This prayer is not only a prayer that we may receive our daily bread; it is also a prayer that we may share our daily bread with others.

***Therefore, when we pray, we should ask God to meet your needs for today! – don't worry about tomorrow.***

In my next post, we will continue to unpack the Disciple's Prayer by looking at the issue of forgiveness.