

6:1 *Take heed*- Gk. 'to hold the mind towards'. Again and again, the Lord's emphasis is upon the innermost functioning of the mind and thought processes. For to be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity.

*Before men, to be seen of them*- The same Greek phrase is used in Mt. 23:5 about the Pharisees doing all their works motivated by this desire to be seen of men. What we do *unseen* by men is therefore the litmus test of our love and Christianity. We should almost have an obsession about doing good works unseen by men- we must "take heed", consciously set our mind, to do unseen acts of kindness to others. Because the "reward", the nature of our eternity, will depend on these things.

*Reward*- Salvation is by grace, but the 'reward' will be in terms of how the *nature* of our eternal existence reflects good things done in this life. The Greek word for 'reward' is quite common in the Sermon, and the first usage of it suggests that the reward is given in Heaven right now (Mt. 5:12 "great *is* your reward in Heaven", s.w. Jn. 4:36 "he that reaps receives wages / reward, and gathers fruit unto life eternal"; Mt. 5:46; 6:1,2,5,16). Yet the Lord comes from Heaven to give us the rewards after we have been resurrected at the last day (Mt. 20:8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12). So if we will be given an eternal reward for our works, it follows that there is a recompense for us noted in the books of Heaven at the very point we do the good deed. But there will be no such recompense for things which are openly seen of men, or anything which is consciously done so as to be seen by men. In the reality of life, the hardest thing about good deeds is when we sense nobody appreciates us, that we are holding the fort alone, that we have no recognition. On one hand, recognition for labour is hugely important to our basic psychological makeup- and employers have all come to realize that. It is only by appreciating the principle of eternal blessing for being *unrecognized* that we can live the way Jesus asks of us. It is my observation in the life of believers that often the Lord's most zealous servants are marginalized, falsely accused, rejected from churches etc. The Lord's teaching here makes perfect sense of that phenomenon. He wants them to continue their service in a way which will be eternally recognized, and He wants to ensure their motives for their good works are not in order to be seen of men. Therefore He allows them to be marginalized. So that their works may be totally sincere, and receive an eternal recognition. It is also the case that when serving others, we reflect that nobody realized all the host of planning and frustrations which went into one good deed. A plan to visit someone in hospital may involve struggles with public transport, getting lost on the way, forgetting our telephone, being late home which meant we missed something important... and so forth. It is all those good deeds which others don't see. They 'see' only that we spent 15 minutes in a hospital visiting someone. But those other components to the good deed of the 15 minutes are all carefully logged with the Lord.

6:2 *Sound a trumpet*- The reference may be to the bronze collection 'trumpet' into which the wealthy loudly poured large numbers of pennies. Remember that Jesus was addressing His

sermon to the illiterate and desperately poor. There was little likelihood they would ever do this. So we are to understand the Lord as making a warning out of those wealthy people- to all of us, in whatever context, great or small, to not advertise our kindnesses, and to not be motivated to it by the thought of what others would think of it.

*That they may have glory of men* - Perhaps the emphasis is upon "they". Our good works are to be so that "men" give glory to *God* (Mt. 5:16). To have any intention of attracting glory to ourselves is therefore to play God. For all glory is to go to Him.

*Have their reward*- The Greek translated "have" means both to receive fully, and intransitively, 'to keep away'. They get their full reward now, so they are keeping themselves away from any future reward at the last day. According to the allusion here in 1 Tim. 4:8, the implication is that we aren't to take Mt. 6:2,3 ("they have their reward") as implying that we have *no* reward in this life. We do (cp. Mt. 19:29).

6:3 *Do alms*- Jesus was addressing the very poorest in society. And yet He assumed they would do some good and show some generosity to others. We can too easily dismiss Bible teaching about generosity and assume it applies to the rich, or at least, not to me. Yet the Lord's implication is that every single person can give and be generous in some way. The Lord speaks here of "*when*" you give, rather than *if* you give. He took giving to others in need as being a basic, intrinsic part of life in Him.

*Your left hand*- There had developed a strong Jewish tradition that the right hand side of a man was his spiritual side, and the left hand side was the equivalent of the New Testament 'devil'. The Lord Jesus referred to this understanding when He warned: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Mt. 6:3)- implying that the good deeds of the spiritual man would be misused by the 'devil', e.g. in using them as grounds for spiritual pride.

*Let not... know*- The idea perhaps is that our good deeds should not be done consciously, we hardly know ourselves that we are doing them. The Lord taught just the same when He portrayed the faithful at the last day almost arguing back with their Lord before His judgment seat, totally denying they had done the good deeds which He was now rewarding them for ("when did we see You...", Mt. 25:39).

6:4 *Your Father who sees in secret Himself shall reward you openly* - as if God is especially manifest in Christ when we stand before him in judgment to receive our rewards openly. Our prayers "in secret" will be 'rewarded' "openly"; but the language of 'open reward' is used by the Lord in reference to the judgment: "For the son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels; and then he shall reward [s.w.] every man" (Mt. 16:27). In that day the workers will

be 'rewarded' for their work (s.w. Mt. 20:8; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12); yet Mt. 6:4-6 says they will be rewarded for their prayers. Prayer will only ultimately be answered when the Lord returns; hence Mt. 6:4-6 leads on to the Lord's prayer, with its emphasis upon requesting the coming of the Kingdom, forgiveness etc. rather than petty human requests. Here again we see a connection between prayer and the final judgment.

*In secret*- So secret, according to our suggestion on 6:3, that we ourselves are not even fully conscious of them. There is repeated emphasis that what is in secret, concealed from view, will be openly rewarded (Mt. 6:6,18; Lk. 12:2). The day of judgment will be a judging of the secret things (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5). Absolutely nothing that is now hid shall not then be made open- this is a considerable theme in the Lord's teaching (Mt. 10:26; Mk. 4:22; Lk. 8:17; 12:2). The Lord's own journey to die at Jerusalem was done 'in secret'- as so often, He spoke His teaching to Himself (Jn. 7:10). The need for a sense of significance, reward and recognition to be attached to our works is basic to the structure of human personality. We're not asked to deny this, to live as if we are more or less than human. We're asked instead to realize that the day for that shall come, but it is not now, nor are we to seek it now from the eyes of men.

*Openly*- The public dimension to the judgment process will mean that somehow in a moment we will know 'the secret things' of each other. Only with that basis of understanding could believers who appear to differ in this life live eternally together.

6:5 *Seen of men*- The same Greek word is occurs in 6:16,18 (AV "to appear"). Doing spiritual things for the sake of external appearance was clearly a particular concern of the Lord Jesus. Church life inevitably leads to temptations in this area- mixing with the same people regularly, with families intermarrying over the years, appearance becomes a great temptation. But having this as a motivation for any act of spirituality is so abhorrent to the Lord.

6:6 *Shut your door*- The Lord taught the intensity of the life He required by taking Old Testament passages which refer to the crisis of the last days, and applying them to the daily life of His people. Take Is. 26:20, which speaks of how in the final tribulation, God's people will shut the doors around them and pray. The Lord applies this to the daily, regular prayer of His people- we are to pray in secret, in our room, with doors closed (Mt. 6:6)- clearly an allusion to the Isaiah passage. In the time of Elisha we read that when a problem arose, the people concerned went indoors and shut the door. Going inside and shutting the door is associated with prayer, both by the Lord (Mt. 6:6) and Elisha himself (2 Kings 4:33). The other instances of shutting the door don't involve prayer, but they involve obediently doing something in faith- the woman shut the door upon her sons and poured out the oil in faith; she shut the door upon her sick son (2 Kings 4:5,21). Perhaps the implication is that what she did in faith and hope was read by God as prayer, even though she didn't apparently verbalize anything. The widow woman

shut the door and started to pour out the oil into the vessels (2 Kings 4:5); the way the Lord alludes to this implies that she prayed before she started pouring, and yet she was sure already that it would happen (Mt. 6:6). This should inspire a spirit of soberness in our prayers.

*Your Father*- We should be saying and expressing things to God which are our most intense, essential, personal feelings. We cannot, therefore, easily use trite, stock phrases in our personal prayers. Note the grammatically needless repetition of the personal pronoun in Mt. 6:6: "You, when *you* pray, enter into *your* closet, and when *you* have shut *your* door, pray to *your* Father, which is in secret; and *your* Father who sees in secret shall reward *you* openly". Likewise when reading the Psalms, especially 71, note how many times David addresses God with the personal pronoun: thee, thy, thou... it really is a personal relationship.

*6:7 Vain repetitions*- We will not use "vain repetitions" (Mt. 6:7); the Greek means literally 'to stutter / stammer with the *logos*'. We know what the man with a chronic stammer is trying to say before he actually finishes saying it. To hear him saying the same syllables again and again is a frustration for us. It's a telling way of putting it. God knows our need before we ask (Mt. 6:8). Say it, if we have to be explicit, and mean what we ask. And leave it there. 'Don't keep stammering on in your prayers' is to be connected with what comes a bit later: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek)... but seek (i.e. pray for, Is. 55:16) the Kingdom of God, and His (imputed) righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:31-33). We are not merely to believe that what we ask for we will receive. Note how again the word *logos* occurs; we commented several times in chapter 5 that this is a core idea in the Sermon. Our innermost thought and intention is of the essence.

*6:8 Your Father knows*- This gives a profound insight into the purpose of prayer. Prayer is not in order to inform God of human need. He knows all things, and He knows every human need. So if prayer is not in order to inform God of anything, what is it for? Ultimately, it is for our benefit. Keeping on and on repeating our perceived needs, repeating them vainly, as if we are endlessly stuttering, is actually a form of selfishness. Prayer is to be about dialogue with God, sharing life with Him, confession, sharing thoughts. An analysis of David's prayers as recorded in the book of Psalms shows that only about 5% of the verses are requests for anything material. The rest is simply talking with God. The idea of prayer as a mindless repetition of specific needs, in the belief that the more times we state them, the more likely God is to respond- is the very opposite of the kind of prayer which God intends. The Lord's model prayer which He goes on to give features only one request for anything material- and that is simply a request that God gives us enough food for today.

*Things you have need of-* The hope of the future Kingdom means that we will not now be materialistic. It will give us strength against materialism. And the model prayer was given by Jesus in the context of His comment on how some tend to always be asking God for material things. The Lord teaches that the paramount thing we should request is the coming of the Kingdom, and our forgiveness so that we might partake in it. *This* is the request we should be making- for "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of... after *this* manner therefore pray ye..." (Mt. 6:9,10). Later in Mt. 6 the Lord repeats the same words: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things... seek ye first his Kingdom" (Mt. 6:32-34 RV). The structure of the Lord's prayer reflects this- for the first and only request in it is a seeking for the coming of His Kingdom. The RV of Heb. 10:34,35 brings out well the same theme: "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your *possessions*, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better *possession*" (RVmg). Having warned against materialism, the Lord bids His men to "rather seek ye the Kingdom of God... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk. 9:31,32) in the place of seeking for material things. The more we grasp that it really is God's will that we will be there, the more strength we will have to resist seeking for material things in this life. By being sure that we will be there, the Kingdom becomes our treasure, where our heart is, rather than any material treasure in this life (Lk. 9:34).

*Before you ask-* The Kingdom prophecy that "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Is. 65:24) is applied to us *now* (Mt. 6:8)- as if answered prayer is a foretaste of the Kingdom life.

6:9 *This manner-* The model prayer given by the Lord can of course be used just as it is. But it's worth noting that the Lord's own subsequent prayers, and some of Paul, repeated the essence of some of the phrases in it, but in different words. This may be a useful pattern for us in learning how to formulate prayers. The prayer of Jesus in Jn. 17 is in some ways an expanded restatement of the model prayer. In it, the Lord asks for the Father's Name to be hallowed or glorified (Jn. 17:1,11,12); for His work or will to be done or finished (Jn. 17:4); for deliverance from the evil one (Jn. 17:15). The prayer of Jn. 17 can be divided into three units of about the same length (Jn. 17:1-8; 9-19; 20-26). Each has the theme of glory, of directly addressing the Father, and of the needs of God's people- all clearly taken from the model prayer.

*Our Father-* The model prayer begins with the words "Our Father". Straight away we are bidden remember that no man is an island; the Lord intended us to be aware of the entire community of believers in our private prayers. "Give us this day *our* daily bread" may appear hard for comfortably off Christians to pray- until they grasp that they are praying for "our" daily bread, not "my" daily bread. There are so many in the brotherhood for whom having daily bread is indeed a constantly uncertain question. We should be aware of the whole brotherhood; and pray that "we" will be given our bread for today.

*Who is in Heaven*- A feature of Biblical prayers is the way they start with some reference to God, often involving several clauses. We are to firstly visualize Him there. This is to be connected with the idea of lifting the eyes to Heaven at the start of a prayer (Ps. 121:1; 123:1; Ez. 23:27; Dan. 4:34; Lk. 16:23; 18:13; Jn. 11:41; 17:1). "God *is in Heaven*, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few (more often translated "little")" (Ecc. 5:2). Ezra, Nehemiah and Solomon all start their major prayers with a reference to the fact that God really *is* there in Heaven. The fact that God is a material, corporeal being is vital here. The very fact God has a spatial location, in Heaven, with Christ at His right hand, indicates of itself that God is a physical rather than purely spiritual being. The fact Christ really is there, seated at God's right hand interceding for us, was a concept which filled Paul's thinking (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 cp. 1 Pet. 3:22). This teaching about our having a *Heavenly* Father may appear quite painless to accept; but it was radical, demanding stuff in the first century. The family then was "the centrally located institution maintaining societal existence... it [was] the primary focus of personal loyalty and it [held] supreme sway over individual life". "Our father, *who is in Heaven*" was a prayer hard to pray if one really accepted the full import of the words; every bit as much as it is today. The idea of belonging to another family, of which the invisible Lord Jesus in Heaven was the head, belonging to a new society of world-wide brothers and sisters, where the Lord from Heaven held "supreme sway over individual life", was radical indeed. It took huge commitment and a deep faith in this invisible head of the new family to step out from ones existing family. And the call of Christ is no less radical today. The social circle at uni, the guys at work, our unbelieving family members... now all take a radical second place to our precious family in Christ. And yet we so easily abuse or disregard the importance of our spiritual family; we too easily exclude them, won't meet with them, can't be bothered about them.

"*Hallowed / sanctified be Your name*" uses an aorist tense which implies that it will be accomplished as a one-time act; at the coming of the Lord. Indeed, the aorist tenses in the Lord's model prayer are arresting; each phrase of the prayer asks for something to be done in a one-time sense. This alone suggests an intended 'answer' in terms of the final establishment of the Kingdom. "Hallowed be Your Name" was actually one of the Eighteen Benedictions used by most Jews at the time. This common phrase was consciously seen as a reference to the YHWH Name (1). But the Lord purposefully juxtaposes *Abba*, "Father", with that phrase. This Aramaic, non-Hebrew, familiar word, an equivalent of "Daddy!", is placed by the Lord next to Judaism's most well known and frequently used blessing of the YHWH Name. By doing so, He was making the Name even more hallowed and glorious- by showing that the essence of that Name speaks of familiar family relationship with us, and is no longer the carefully guarded preserve of Hebrew people, thought, culture and language.

6:10 *Kingdom come*- Greek scholars have pointed out that some phrases in the Lord's prayer show a remarkable lack of etiquette and the usual language of petition to a superior; literally, the text reads: "Come Thy Kingdom, done Thy will". Is this part of the "boldness" in approaching

God which the NT speaks of? That God should encourage us in this (although He also encourages us in reverential fear of Him) reflects something of His humility. The Kingdom of God refers to that over which God reigns. We are “a colony of Heaven” in our response to His principles (Phil. 3:20 Moffat). We are to pray for His Kingdom to come, so that His will may be done on earth (Mt. 6:10). The Kingdom and the doing of His will are therefore paralleled. His Kingdom reigns over all in Heaven, for there, all the Angels are obedient to Him (Ps. 103:19-21). By praying for the Kingdom to come on earth we are not only praying for the Lord’s second coming, but for the progress of the Gospel world-wide right now. Not only that more men and women will hear it and respond, but that those who have accepted it might work God’s will rather than their own to an ever greater extent. Whether or not we can physically spread the Gospel is in this sense irrelevant; our prayer should be, first and foremost if the pattern of the Lord’s prayer is to be taken exactly, for the triumph of the Gospel world-wide. It has been pointed out by Philip Yancey that “Thy Kingdom come!” was violently in conflict with the Roman view that the lives of a subject people like Israel belonged to Caesar’s kingdom. “Your kingdom come!” is therefore a word of defiance; to pray it is a subversive activity. This is also how the authorities understand the ministry of Jesus: it is subversive and not to be tolerated” (2). The word *basileia* translated “Kingdom” definitely brought to mind the imperial reign or empire of Rome. Thus Hal Taussig comments: “Whenever anyone in Jesus’ time used the term “basileia”, the first thing people thought of was the Roman “kingdom” or “empire”. That is, “basileia” really meant “Roman empire” to most people who heard it... It was to many ears a direct insult to the Roman empire. Uttered in the presence of Roman soldiers, such a prayer could have gotten [a person] in immediate trouble” (3). And so with us, the seeking of the future Kingdom is a radical denial of the spirit of our age, which seeks its Kingdom now; it demands a separation from the world around us. The well-known description of the Kingdom in Is. 2:1-4 is in the context of appealing to Israel to change their ways. Because they would *then* walk in the ways of the Lord, therefore “O house of Israel [therefore] Come ye [now] and walk in the ways of the Lord” (2:5). The hope of Israel ought to motivate Israel to live the Kingdom life here and now.

*Your will be done-* Again uses an aorist which demands a one-time fulfilment- in the sense of ‘May Your will come about...’. The will of God is often associated with His ultimate plan of salvation (e.g. Eph. 1:5-12; Col. 1:20). It has been pointed out that “Hallowed be Your Name” is (grammatically) a request for action, rather than simply an expression of praise. Jesus prayed this in Gethsemane and it cost Him His life. We know from the Old Testament that God in fact “hallows” His own Name (Ez. 20:41; 28:25; 36:22,23; 38:16; 39:27). By asking God to “hallow” or sanctify / realize that Name in our lives, we are definitely praying in accordance with His will. He wishes to do this- and so He will surely do this in our lives if we ask Him. All the principles connected with His Name will be articulated in our lives and experience for sure if we pray for

this- for we will be praying according to His revealed will in His word. And the ultimate fulfilment of all this will be in final coming of the Kingdom. But see on 7:21.

In interpreting the Sermon on the Mount, we need to look for similar phrases within the Sermon in order to grasp the sense the Lord was seeking to develop. And we have just such a connection of thought here when we observe that the Sermon concludes with an appeal to 'do the will of My Father' (7:21; and the theme continues in the Lord's teaching, e.g. Mt. 12:50; 21:31; Lk. 12:47). We are praying therefore not only for Christ's return when the literal coming of the Kingdom on earth will mean that God's will shall be done on earth. We are asking for the principles of God's rulership / Kingdom over men (as outlined in the Lord's parables of the Kingdom) to be manifested in our lives; and for strength to do God's will on earth here and now. In probing deeper how the Lord understood the Father's will, we find the term specifically and repeatedly linked with the salvation of persons, supremely enabled through the Lord's death (Mt. 18:14; Jn. 6:39,40; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:5). We would therefore be justified in seeing this request for the Kingdom to come and [in parallel] God's will to be done as a request for the successful spreading of the Gospel worldwide (see note on "in earth" below). The coming of the Kingdom and the doing of God's will are in parallel- the coming of the Kingship of God in human life means that humans do God's will as taught by the Lord in the Sermon. Of course, the final physical coming of the Kingdom is also in view, but that is the final manifestation of the process which is now ongoing in human hearts. This more internal, spiritual interpretation of the coming of the Kingdom would be in line with the rest of the Sermon, which emphasizes the rule of Divine principles in the deepest parts of the human heart.

This phrase occurs verbatim on the Lord's lips when He Himself prayed in Gethsemane "Your will be done" (Mt. 26:42). So often we find the Lord Himself being the embodiment of His own teaching in the Sermon. The difficulty with which the Lord said those words shows how hard it is to really pray 'the Lord's prayer'. The way it can be rattled off so quickly is tragic.

*In earth as... in Heaven-* Gk. *epi* the earth, as the will of God is now done in (Gk. *en*) Heaven. *Epi* in this context has the sense of being spread throughout; whereas *en* more simply and directly means "in". Is there a hint here that we are to be praying for the success of the geographical spreading of the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the earth? Not just knowledge of that Gospel, but people actually submitting to God's Kingship and living by Kingdom principles; not just baptisms but transformed lives. By doing God's will as it is now done in Heaven, we are developing outposts of God's Heavenly Kingdom here on earth, and this will come to term in the return of Christ and the more physical establishment of the Kingdom on the planet, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, in every fibre of earthly existence.

6:11 *Give us this day our daily bread-* This has long been recognized as an inadequate translation of a very strange Greek phrase. The adjective *epiousios* in "our daily bread" is one example of



Christ's radical use of language; there in the midst of the prayer which the Lord bid His followers constantly use, was a word which was virtually unknown to them. Our bread only-for-this-day was the idea; the word is used for the rations of soldiers. The idea is 'Give us today, right now, the bread / food of tomorrow'. In ancient Judaism, *mahar* means not only tomorrow but the great Tomorrow, i.e. the Kingdom. Jesus spoke of the inauguration of the future Kingdom in terms of eating food together (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 6:21; 14:15; 22:29,30; Rev. 7:16). 'Give us the future Kingdom today, may it come right now' is perhaps one of the levels on which He intended us to understand the prayer. The aorist implies: 'Give us this once and final time' the bread of tomorrow. The Lord was surely alluding to the way that Israel in the wilderness had been told that "in the morning [tomorrow] you shall be filled with bread"; and this was widely understood in first century Palestine as being typical of the coming of Messiah's Kingdom. Notice too how Is. 55:10 connects the descent of God's word made flesh in Jesus, with the giving of bread. And one practical point. Even though we may have daily bread, we are still to pray for it. It's rather like Zech. 10:1: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain"; even when it's the season, still ask Him for what it appears you naturally already have. Israel were fed with manna one day at a time- this is so stressed (Ex. 16:4,19,20).

The idea of 'daily bread' recalls the gift of manna. There was to be no hoarding of manna- anything extra was to be shared with others (Ex. 16:8; 2 Cor. 8:15). But we live in a world where the financial challenges of retirement, housing, small family size [if any family at all]... mean that there appears no other option but to 'hoard manna' for the future. To some extent this may be a reflection of the way that life in these very last days is indeed quite different to anything previously known in history; but all the same, we face a very real challenge. Are we going to hoard manna, for our retirement, for our unknown futures? Or will we rise up to the challenge to trust in God's day by day provision, and share what's left over? "Give us this day our bread-for-today" really needs to be prayed by us daily. Let's give full weight to the Lord's command to pray for only "our daily bread", the daily rations granted to a soldier on active duty. It's almost impossible to translate this term adequately in English. In the former USSR and Communist East Germany (DDR), there was the idea that nobody in a Socialist state should go hungry. And so if you were hungry in a restaurant after eating, you had the right to ask for some food, beyond what you paid for. In the former East Germany, the term *Sättigungsbeilage* was used for this in restaurants- the portion of necessity. It's this food we should ask God for- the food to keep us alive, the food which a Socialist restaurant would give you for free. We shouldn't be thinking in terms of anything more than this. It's an eloquent essay in what our attitude to wealth, materialism and long term self-provision ought to be.

To steal is to take the Name of Yahweh called upon us in vain (Prov. 30:9), and therefore we ask to be given *only* our daily bread and no more (NIV); not so much that if we are found out, the Name will be brought into disrepute, but rather that we personally will have blasphemed the

imperative of Yahweh which is heavy upon us; these words of Agur are applied to us in Mt. 6:11.

6:12 *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*- Probably an allusion to the jubilee. We release / forgive men their debt to us, as God does to us. If we chose not to participate in this Jubilee by not releasing others, then we cannot expect to receive it ourselves (note the Jubilee allusions in Lk. 24:47). Around 90% of Old Testament references to sin use the metaphor of a weight or burden, which can be lifted by forgiveness. The Lord Jesus prefers to speak of sin as a debt, which can be forgiven by not being demanded and the debt erased. The metaphor of debt is somewhat richer than that of burdens. It opens the possibility that God lent to us, that He allowed us to get into that debt- because He didn't strike us dead for the sin. 'Debt' also carries with it the idea that we would like to repay, but cannot. This is the flavour of the Lord's opening to the Sermon- that He is the solution for those who would like to be spiritual but feel unable to be as they would wish to be (see on 5:6). The release of debt carries with it a greater sense of gratitude, knowing that we should not have got into the debt in the first place. All this was foreseen by the Lord in His change of metaphor from sin as weight to sin as debt. It has been noted that sin was not spoken as debt until Jesus introduced the idea. We are in debt to God. And yet so many have the idea that God owes them, and big time. The prayer of Apollonius of Tyana was that "O ye gods, give me the things which are owing to me". And that ancient attitude is alive today, leading to some who think it is their right not to work and to be supported, or expect some kind of material blessing from God. When actually, we are in deep debt to God, and forgiven it only by pure grace.

*Our debtors*- Those "indebted" to us (Lk. 11:4) are those who have a debt to us. But Biblically, who are those who are 'indebted'? The same Greek word occurs often in the New Testament. Mt. 18:30 explains that there is a debt to us if we have been sinned against and it's not been reconciled. The debt our brethren have to us, and we to them, is to love one another, to lay our lives down for each other, to entertain and receive each other at home (s.w. 3 Jn. 8; 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:11). A wife has her husband in her debt if he doesn't love her with the love of Christ (Eph. 5:28); our brethren are in debt to us if they don't give us material help when we truly need it (Rom. 15:27); or if they don't wash our feet (Jn. 13:14). A debt implies that it's not been paid; and so I come to the conclusion that the *forgiveness* of our debtors is forgiving our brethren when they don't love us as they should, don't care for us... and never apologize or rectify it. The debt is outstanding; they've not cleared it. But we are to forgive it; we are to forgive unconditionally, without demanding restoration or grovelling repentance before us. This is the challenge of that phrase in the Lord's prayer. For we ask for "our sins" in general to be likewise forgiven; and they surely include many 'secret sins' which we don't even perceive or haven't repented of. And further. "As we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Lk. 11:4) can

actually be read as a word of command, a statement that is actually a request. The request is that the sins of those who've sinned against us be forgiven- in this sense, "whosoever sins ye remit [s.w. forgive] they are remitted unto them" (Jn. 20:23). That's another challenging thought. If they're impenitent, how can they be forgiven? But if *we* forgive them, perhaps we are to understand that God is happy to forgive them. If we feel, as I do, that we've been sinned against so much... then we have a wonderful opportunity to gain our own forgiveness and even that of those people... by forgiving them. The more I hurt at how others have treated me, the more I realize my own desperate need for forgiveness. The two things, as the Lord foresaw in His model prayer, dovetail seamlessly together.

Further evidence that Jesus prayed in Aramaic is found by comparing the two records of the Lord's prayer; Matthew has "forgive us our debts", whilst Luke has "forgive us our sins". The Aramaic word *hobha* means both 'sin' and 'debt'. The conclusion is therefore that Jesus taught the disciples to pray in their native Aramaic dialect rather than in Hebrew or Greek. Further, the Lord's prayer has many links to the *Kaddish*, an ancient Aramaic prayer which included phrases like "Exalted and hallowed be his great name... may he let his kingdom rule... speedily and soon".

*As we...* The crucial little Greek word *hos* is elsewhere translated: according as, as soon as, even as, like as, as greatly as, since, whenever, while. Clearly enough, our forgiveness by God is dependent upon and of the same nature as our forgiveness of others.

*"Forgive us our / debts sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us" (Lk.)* again uses the aorist which implies 'Forgive us this once'. Could this not be an anticipation of the state of the believer before the judgment seat of Christ- 'forgive me please this once for all my sins, as I have forgiven those who sinned against me'. If so, we have a powerful exhortation to forgive *now*; for in that awesome moment, it will be so apparent that the Lord's gracious acceptance of us will be directly proportional to how deeply we accepted and forgave our brethren in this life. Notice how strongly Jesus links future judgment with our present forgiveness (Lk. 6:37). He teaches us to pray now for forgiveness on the basis of how we have forgiven others, knowing that in prayer, we have a foretaste of the judgment. Now we can come boldly before the throne of grace in prayer, just as we will come before that same throne in the last day.

6:13 *Lead us*- The Greek *eisphero* definitely means to lead inward. The internal process of temptation is in view here, as explained specifically by James 1:13-15- which may be a specific comment on this part of the Sermon. Much of James is an expansion upon the Sermon. Whilst the process of temptation is internal (and note how internal processes are the great theme of the Sermon), God is capable of leading a person in the process. The dynamics in the upward and downward spirals are ultimately of God.

*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one-* This can only really come true when we are changed into divine nature; for only then will we be freed /delivered [aorist- once, finally, for all time] from the 'devil' of sin. The word for trial / temptation is *peirasmos*, and I have never been entirely satisfied that we can reconcile the Lord's words here with the fact that God does not tempt any man (James 1:13-15). However, I feel happier with the idea that the Lord may specifically be bidding us pray for deliverance from the latter day holocaust to come upon the saints. The Lord Jesus can keep us from "the hour of trial [*peirasmos*] which is coming on the whole world" (Rev. 3:10). When the disciples were bidden pray that they enter not into temptation (Mk. 14:38- *peirasmos* again), they were being asked to pray the model prayer with passionate concentration and meaning. Yet those men in Gethsemane were and are representative of the latter day saints who are bidden pray that they may escape "all those things", the hour of trial / *peirasmos* which is coming, and to stand acceptably before the Son of man at His coming. We ought to be praying fervently for this deliverance; but I wonder how many of us are? For the days of the final tribulation will be shortened for the sake of the elect- i.e., for the sake of their prayers (Mk. 13:19,20). The final tribulation of the last days will be the supreme struggle between the flesh and spirit, between the believer and the world, between Christ and the Biblical 'devil'; and we are to pray that we will be delivered victorious from that struggle. Thus "Lead us not into 'the test'" (Mt. 6:13) could in this context be understood as a plea to save us from entering into the time of final tribulation- just as the Lord specifically exhorts us to pray to be delivered from that time. The implication would be that the final time of testing will be so severe that indeed the elect will scarcely be saved. It seems to me that none of us have the urgent sense of the time of testing ahead which we should have; how many are praying daily to be spared it? How many are in actual denial that it will ever come, even though it's clear enough in Scripture?

We must pray not to be led into temptation (Mt. 6:13); but when we fall into such temptation (s.w.), count it all joy, James says (1:2). The exercise of praying not to experience those temptations was for our spiritual benefit, and God is willing that it should be so.

*Deliver us from evil-* Surely alluded to in 2 Pet. 2:9 "The Lord knows how to *deliver* the Godly out of temptations". Evil and temptation are thereby paralleled.

The Lord Jesus based this part of His prayer on Old Testament passages like 1 Chron. 4:10; Ps. 25:22; 26:11; 31:8; 34:22; 69:18; 78:35,42; 140:1 and Prov. 2:12; 6:24, which ask for 'deliverance' from evil *people*, sin, distress, tribulation etc. here on earth. Not one of those passages speaks of deliverance from a personal, superhuman Satan. Esther's prayer in Es. 4:19 LXX is very similar – "Deliver us from the hand of the evildoer", but that 'evildoer' was Haman, not any personal, superhuman Satan. Even if we insist upon reading 'the evil one', "the evil one" in the Old Testament was always "the evil man in Israel" (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor.

5:13) – never a superhuman being. And there may be another allusion by the Lord to Gen. 48:16, where God is called the One “who has redeemed me from all evil”. As the Old Testament ‘word made flesh’, the thinking of the Lord Jesus was constantly reflective of Old Testament passages; but in every case here, the passages He alluded to were *not* concerning a superhuman Devil figure. God ‘delivers from’ “every trouble” (Ps. 54:7), persecutors and enemies (Ps. 142:6; 69:14) – but as Ernst Lohmeyer notes, “There is no instance of the [orthodox understanding of the] Devil being called ‘the evil one’ in the Old Testament or in the Jewish writings” (4).

It’s been observed that every aspect of the Lord’s prayer can be interpreted with reference to the future coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. Prayer for deliverance from evil, the time of testing (Gk.), would then tally well with the Lord’s exhortation to pray that we may be delivered from the final time of evil coming on the earth (Lk. 21:36). Another insight into this petition is that God does in fact lead men in a downward spiral as well as in an upward spiral of relationship with Him – Pharaoh would be the classic example. “Why do you make us err from your ways?” was the lament of Israel to their God in Is. 63:17. It is perhaps this situation more than any which we should fear – being hardened in sin, drawing ever closer to the waterfall of destruction, until we come to the point that the forces behind us are now too strong to resist... Saul lying face down in the dirt of ancient Palestine the night before his death would be the classic visual image of it. And the Lord would be urging us to pray earnestly that we are not led in that downward spiral. His conversation in Gethsemane, both with the disciples and with His Father, had many points of contact with the text of the Lord’s Prayer. “Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation” (Mt. 26:41) would perhaps be His equivalent of “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”.

*For Yours...* - The sense of ‘for’ is definitely ‘because...’, but it could simply be with reference to the entire preceding prayer. Or it could particularly be with reference to the preceding request: “Deliver us from evil”. In any case, the question arises: Why should God answer the prayer, be it the entire prayer or the specific request for deliverance from evil, because the Kingdom, power and glory is God’s? The idea may be that because the Kingdom we seek now to be part of, and to eternally live in, is God’s, therefore it follows that He earnestly desires to grant it to us His children. And we plead that He hears our requests, especially for deliverance from temptation and evil, because surely He wants to give us His glorious Kingdom. Because the Kingdom is *His*, all glory is to Him, and He wants to see us giving Him glory; because He has all power – therefore we ask Him to give us the requests we have made, because they are all intended to achieve glory to Him and to ensure our entry into His Kingdom. Another angle of exposition would be to consider that we ask for deliverance from temptation and sin because we know that God has rulership (“Kingdom”) and power over all – given His unlimited physical and spiritual power, we ask Him to use it to answer our requests. This reasoning of course assumes that all that has preceded in the prayer is in order for us to enter the Kingdom and to see His glory

worked out. Any requests for merely human benefit and advantage cannot be concluded with such an argument- that we ask God to hear this *because* the Kingdom, power and glory is His.

*For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever-* This is the appropriate conclusion to a prayer that asks for the establishment of that Kingdom. Whilst commenting upon the Lord's prayer, it is worth pointing out that the Lord repeated the essence of each phrase at various points during His life. When facing His ultimate struggle when facing up to the cross, He asked that the Father's Name would be glorified (Jn. 12:28)- quoting His own words from His model prayer. It hurt and cost Him so much to pray that prayer- the prayer we may have known for so many years that we can pray it almost at no cost. But to truly ask for the Father's will to be done is in fact a commitment to the way of the cross (Jn. 6:38; Heb. 10:7-10; Mk. 14:36). So let us pray the prayer- but putting meaning into the words.

May I place two well-known Scriptures together in your minds. "*Yours* [God's] is the Kingdom". And "Blessed are you poor, for *yours* is the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). The Lord assures us that the Father wants to give *His* Kingdom to those who are poor in spirit, to the broken, to the self-doubters, the uncertain, those uncomfortable with themselves, the unbearably and desperately lonely, the awkwardly spoken... the poor in spirit. Those who would be the very last to believe that God would give *them* what is evidently *His* Kingdom. But not only *will* the Father do this, but Jesus stresses that it *is* ours right now. The certainty of the glory that will be revealed for us means that we cope better with suffering; as Paul writes, they "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

*Amen-* Joachim Jeremias mentions that "according to idiomatic Jewish usage the word *amen* is used to affirm, endorse or appropriate the words of another person [whereas] in the words of Jesus it is used to introduce and endorse Jesus' own words... to end one's own prayer with *amen* was considered a sign of ignorance" (5). Thus Jesus was introducing a radically new type of speaking. But He did so because He wanted us to realize that if our spirit is united with God's, then our words to God are in a sense God talking to Himself; hence we say 'Amen' to our own words, when 'amen' was usually a confirmation of God's words. Jn. 16:26 fits in here, where in the context of speaking of the unity of the believers with the Father and with Himself, the Lord says that He will not need to pray for the believer, but God Himself will hear the believer. I take this to mean that Jesus foresaw that the time would come when our prayer would be His prayer. It's not so much that He prays for us, but rather prays with us and even through us.